University of Alberta

Spiritual Experiences of Women in Physical Activity, Sport, Martial Arts and Dance

by

Deborah J. Hambly

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 1998

National Library of Canada
Acquisitions and Bibliographic Services
395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada
Acquisitions et services bibliographiques
395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-28893-5

Canada

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Spiritual Experiences of Women in Physical Activity, Sport, Martial Arts and Dance* submitted by Deborah J. Hambly in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sports Studies.

Dr. Debra Shogan

Dr. Christine Hanrahan

Dr. Marilyn Assheton-Smith

Dr. Fran Hare

Date: April 14th, 1998

Dedication

To my grandmother, May S. Hambly – a fantastic role model

Abstract

This research is a preliminary investigation of spiritual experiences of women in physical activity, sport, martial arts and dance. There is little relevant literature on this topic. The Internet, including e-mail, listservs and web pages, was used in every phase. I used qualitative and quantitative methods; a questionnaire, a written autobiographical narrative account, and a Likert scale. The participants had diverse sporting and religious backgrounds, and twelve countries were represented in the sample. The women's narratives were interpreted along eight categories of Mysticism measured in Hood's Scale; and the statistical results showed the relative strength of each of their experiences. The particular relevance of other factors such as the setting, loss of fear, competition, physical refreshment, individual or group activity, were also examined. The study showed, despite a diverse sample of women, much similarity of experience, but more importantly, it revealed the depth and meaning of these experiences.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Debra Shogan for allowing me to use the Internet to conduct the research, and for agreeing to supervise my work while I was studying at a distance. Thank you also to Dr. Fran Hare for her belief in the importance of this topic and for her guidance along the way. Finally, thank you to Carolyn Lee for her patience in tirelessly editing this document, and her encouragement along the way.

Table of Contents

Chapter One	Introduction	p. 1
Chapter Two	Methodology	p. 10
Chapter Three	Participant Characteristics	p. 26
Chapter Four	Data Analysis	p. 37
Chapter Five	Conclusions	p. 72
References		p. 80
Bibliography		p. 84
Appendices		
Appendix A	Index Web Page	p. 86
Appendix B	Web Research Part One	p. 87
Appendix C	Web Research Part Two	p. 89
Appendix D	Sample e-mail consent form	p. 92
Appendix E	Narratives	p. 93
Tables		
Table One	Country of residence and participation	p. 33
Table Two	Years in physical activity	p. 40
Table Three	Statistical Comparison with Hood's study	p. 68
Table Four	Individual correlation coefficients	p. 69
Table Five	Correlation of the eight factors	p. 70

Chapter 1. Introduction

As a graduate student in sports studies, I have an interest in women's sports. I also value spirituality and maintain connections with various religious organizations. Unfortunately, these two important dimensions of my life – sports and spirituality – have, at times, been at odds. I have been taught that spirituality does not involve the body, and that the body does not involve the spirit. I challenge the notion that physical activity and spirituality are mutually exclusive. I feel most alive, most a part of the world, and most connected to others, when I swim. I experience spirituality when the water rushes against my body and I can feel all of my being connected to the Divine. For me, there is nothing more spiritual than swimming.

George Leonard begins his book, *The Ultimate Athlete*, by speaking of sporting activity that goes beyond the realm of fitness (Leonard, 1975, p.3). This realm is one that encompasses not only physical wellbeing, but also that of mind and soul. Are matters of the body and soul unrelated? When used together, are the words "sport" and "spirituality" a strange combination? Are they made stranger still when the word "woman" is added? A preliminary investigation of the topic on the "fem-rel"(feminist-religion) listserv, rendered many telling responses. One woman in particular wrote (K. Martin),

> The act of moving with a soccer ball in concert with other women is at times a spiritual experience. It's like dancing. A rhythmic flow begins to occur. A feeling of connectedness with your own body and with everyone else's out on the field. In the moment, I feel all of who I am, my essence.

Conceptual Baggage

As a child, I attended a fundamentalist Baptist church in Quebec, Canada. In my teenage years, I expanded my religious attendance to include several different denominations, all within Christianity. Since that time, I have been exposed to other religious organizations, and have significantly broadened the scope of my spirituality. Throughout college, I continued

my involvement in sport, competing as a varsity swimmer and training to be a physical educator.

When I was younger, I was not allowed to participate in any sports that interfered with church attendance. I can remember perking my ears up during one sermon as the pastor bellowed from his pulpit, "God loves swimming, but hates nudity!" As a teen, I opted out of church services on occasion for swimming and running competitions, and was frowned upon for my actions. Meanwhile, my younger brother and his friends were shuttled to the hockey rink, between services, as the rules for boys were somehow different than for girls. Not knowing I could think any differently, I set up sport and spirituality in opposition to each other. It was relatively easy to swim for two hours, or to spend the afternoon training on my bike, but I was often plagued by guilt since I could not dedicate the same amount of time to the pursuit of holiness, at least in the ways prescribed by the church.

In the past few years, my views have changed radically. I am withdrawing from the influence of structured religions and trying to become more spiritually self-directed. I am defining what is meaningful for me without the condemnation of religious leaders. My experience was not positive, and yet, as it evolves, I am getting glimpses of the spirit/ body connection that many women have successfully integrated. Currently, I value my deep commitment to sport as a spiritual form. When I run for an hour or two it is not just because my legs are strong, but because my spirit leads. I believe that we were given bodies for our enjoyment, and that using them to their fullest potential is an honour and a sign of the vitality and the power of our existence.

Recently, as I was preparing a unit on lacrosse for my high school physical education classes, I stumbled across a very similar philosophy towards sport. It came in Hinkson's book, *Lacrosse Fundamentals*, where he described the game as having been given to his people by the Creator, and suggested that every time the game was played on earth, a game was also played in the Creator's land (1993, Introduction). Furthermore, people were to play the game in order to make use of their gifts, the "spiritual" gifts of running, throwing and catching.

Background Reading

In both religious and secular settings in North America, the presence of spirituality in physical activities is no longer addressed. Many eastern cultures continue to foster the melding of spirituality and physical activities. There is a plethora of evidence to document the connection of sport to the sacred in previous civilizations (Guttman,1992, pp. 143-152); however, there is little information, and no research, available on the subject of spiritual experiences present in any form of sporting activity in modern times. Therefore, it is impossible to conduct an appropriate literature review: there is simply no relevant material. In the following three paragraphs I highlight the basic literature that has the closest connection to my topic, and my responses to it. This information includes the relation between religious ceremonies and sporting events, both in the present, and in the past.

Although various sporting competitions in earlier civilizations had clear connections to religious ceremonies, this is not the case in North America today. According to Lammer, not only was Pierre de Coubertin's attempt to regain religious character in the Olympics through the creation of a *religio athletae* unsuccessful, but the Olympic games have become "a profane sports festival " (1986, p.23). Most athletes are not encouraged to uphold their sport as a significant contribution to their religious practice, and few would even stop to consider this an option if it were presented. It is also important to consider that neither the church nor the state holds the same monopoly of religious and spiritual influence over the citizens of the west, as it previously exerted in other civilizations.

It has been observed that many North Americans are dedicated to sport at an intensity level high enough to compare with religious activities. The similarities between religious festivities and the ballpark have, in fact, been closely examined. For example, both religion and sport have ruling patriarchs/ coaches and managers, saints/ superstars, scribes/ reporters, shrines/ halls of fame and finally, kingdom seekers or converts and devotees (Higgs, 1992, pp. 89-104).

The status of sport among particular religious organizations has varied over time. A century ago, many religions condemned sports, not only for women but for men too, as they either directed too much focus on the body, or took time away from the worship of a deity.

Recently, most religious organizations have changed this view, and now see sports as a vehicle for training the human component of a body that is dedicated to God, so long as it does not infringe upon the religion. Many organizations even employ sports as a medium for the evangelization of men (Hoffman, 1995).

Csikszentmihalyi has conducted work on the concept of flow which, at a preliminary level, would appear to have similar qualities to that of a spiritual experience in any of the venues provided by physical activity (1982). However, the difference lies in that there is no attention given to the possibility of a spiritual component responsible for the flow or peak experience.

I am a proponent of body theology. This rejects body alienation and encourages people to embrace their full physical natures. Nelson claims that spiritual dualism is the first deadly sin since it underlies and shapes all other sins (1992). Body theology in particular, advocates a reconsideration of the body as a spiritual vessel, indwelt even by the deity. An example of body theology can be taken from the principles of George Sheehan and his "theology of play." Sheehan, a world famous runner, was convinced that there is nothing more spiritual than the human body. Therefore, simple embodied "playing" may be the holiest, most glorifying action possible for both adults and children alike (1992, pp. 83-88).

Feminist Theology, at its foundations, promotes a return to the holistically balanced self. This involves the harmonization of self and body, self and other, and self and world (Reuther, 1993). As a feminist, I see women's involvement in sport as an important step in achieving full equality. For the same reasons, I also believe we need to have women in positions of spiritual and religious leadership before full equality is achieved. Not surprisingly, women have encountered obstacles in both domains. Recognizing the confines that have been placed on women to stop their advancement both in sports and in many organized religions, it is my lifelong goal to provide opportunities for girls and women to advance in the practice of both of these endeavours. I believe that the lack of opportunities could likely hamper their spiritual development.

Preliminary Investigation

Prior to the beginning of this study, I personally interviewed four women regarding their experiences of spirituality and physical activities. The women differed in age and religious background, and were involved in synchronized swimming, hiking, dance and yoga. The synchronized swimmer described her experiences concerning spirituality and physical activities as follows:

> When I did my duet there was that connectedness that comes; it wasn't just a physical thing, it was a spiritual thing, I found, because you can't just put things together and have them click, it was much more than the mechanics of it. There were almost magnets between our bodies.

The hiker, in a different voice, expressed her desire to tell everyone about her experience: "I have this energy, things are clear, it is the feeling of being part of bigger and greater things than yourself." On one particular hike she had ventured off the path, and encountered great difficulty climbing a steep hill of rocks at the end of the day. Initially, she described herself as being giddy and full of laughter, being completely joyful and singing. After realizing the danger she was in, she felt tension, a sense of mortality, and a "complete feeling of something being so much grander than yourself and it was so emotional and spiritual." She continues, "I didn't want to take a picture; I couldn't have captured it, feeling all this respect and so much awe."

For the dancer, spirituality was a natural outflow of the activity. The dance was performed to her god, for the purpose of worship and adoration. She described her experience as "euphoria . . . a total being with the dance, there is no separation of the music and the god. I could sense myself getting up there, totally immersed in this thing, thinking, don't break down now."

The yoga teacher described the feeling with which she is very familiar: "It was so wonderful, this feeling of unity." She asked, "What is it that you can describe as the feeling? If you are really, really full of joy, or you are really, really full of sadness, or you are really at one with what you have been doing." She explained that she had chosen yoga as a spiritual practice since many others did not include the body.

Each of the women defined spirituality in almost exactly the same way. Their responses centred around a connection with the universe, and a harmony with the physical world from tiny atoms to the great cosmos. This connection was described as a union that steered away from individualism, the climax of which is the realization that we each come from the earth. Three of the women mentioned nature in terms of the larger picture of the world and the effect it had on their spiritual connection.

The women used a wide range of words in an attempt to describe the connection of physical activity and spirituality that they had each encountered. They often paused and searched for words, as if not sure what to say. The following words were used to describe the experience:

> communication, exciting, electric, excel, hard work, using your body, powerful, awesome, amusing, euphoria, totally emotional, concentrated, ready, wonderful, energy, part of something bigger, wanting to tell everyone, giddiness, fear, carpe diem, respect, adrenaline, amazing

It became clear from the interviews that the level of involvement in a particular sport might be a factor in the connection with spirituality. In each of the cases, the women had been involved in their sport at a serious level for several years. Each participant practiced her activity on a daily basis for periods of one hour or more. Attitude was clearly important; the physical effort was worthwhile because the women loved their activities. The women also rated the personal importance of their sport and spirituality highly. For the dancer and the yoga teacher, the integration of spirituality and their physical activity was not only completely "natural", but an integral part of their physical activity.

Although these women had different religious backgrounds, their definitions of spirituality were quite similar. When describing the experience of connection between physical activity and spirituality, there was a clear distinction in energy levels as the women told their stories. For each woman who felt the connection, the experience was not only significant but also, more importantly, life-changing.

The Research Question

What are the experiences of spirituality in physical activities from the perspectives of women?

The Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to document and investigate experiences of spirituality and physical activity in the lives of women. There is a lack of information concerning not only the central issue of the connection between spirituality and physical activities, but also the relation of this connection to women. This thesis conducts exploratory research which records and documents experiences of spirituality and physical activity from the viewpoint of women.

Research Methods: The Use of Internet Technologies

The organizers at the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women first started considering electronic communications as a networking tool in 1987 as they found that "E-mail is, without a doubt, an incredibly efficient means of communicating" (Martin, 1997, p. 46). A decade later, I chose to use Internet technologies, involving e-mail and web pages, to conduct my research. I believe that using the Internet for my research was natural since, "The Internet is a great way to meet other women ... to share ideas and inspiration ... it makes the world a smaller place" (Cowden, 1997, p.10).

Although I was living in an isolated community, my sample spanned the globe. I found and kept in touch with participants by using computer mediated communication (CMC). This consisted of posting solicitations for participants on a wide range of listservs that were related to women, sports or spirituality. Volunteers visited the web page and filled in Part One, which they submitted via HTML programmed scripts my e-mail account. I then e-mailed selected participants with a username and password that enabled them to access Part Two of the study, and thanked them for their continued participation. The participating women used their passwords to access the secure site, where they were greeted by name, and given an opportunity to share an account of their experience in narrative form prior to filling out Hood's Scale of Mysticism (Hood, 1997, pp. 29-41).

Esther Dyson states that the "availability of two-way electronic communication is going to change all of our lives" (1997, p. 6). The research methods that I have used to complete this thesis bear testimony to the potential for this new technology in graduate research. It offers new venues for researchers, and a new place for women to meet in order to share their experiences. Dyson also adds that she believes the net is going to play an important role in "sucking power away from central governments" since it is not confined by national boundaries, and geographical distances are obliterated. This is especially important in terms of future possibilities for feminist research, as the net minimizes hierarchies while maximizing the availability of information. It grants opportunities for women to be "heard across the world, and the ability to find information about almost anything" (Dyson, 1997, pp. 6-7). At the same time, the researcher and participant must still work within the confines of their own language and culture.

Research Methodology

This study merited both qualitative and quantitative research methodology. I combined methods by using the "dominant – less dominant design" (Creswell, 1995, p.177). My dominant design focused on the qualitative aspects of women's accounts of their experiences. This was followed by the less dominant design, administering Hood's Scale of Mysticism, a short Likert scale questionnaire (Hood, 1975, pp.29-41). Qualitatively, the narratives of women's experience, in written form, were complemented by the depth of experience and categorization offered in Hood's Scale of Mysticism. By combining qualitative and quantitative research, it is possible to claim greater validity in terms of results (Bryman, 1993, p.131).

I identified the name, age, gender, country of origin, nature of sport and religious involvement, sexual orientation, and the absence or presence of a physical disability for each participant. I also asked participants specifics about their physical activity, such as how long they had been practicing the sport, whether they exercised with a group or individually, and what other physical activities they engaged in. I then asked each of the women, via the web

page, to describe, in one paragraph, their experiences combining physical activity and spirituality. I will focus on the methods and methodology in greater detail in Chapter Two.

Participants

During the two months that I advertised my study on various listservs, more than eighty women visited the research web page and completed the questionnaire in Part One. Out of this number I selected twenty-six who completed the full range of the research. Participants were involved in the research by filling in their responses on an interactive web page. I was able to keep in contact with the women involved through e-mail.

Every woman who volunteered identified her experience of integrating physical activities and spirituality. They came from a range of sporting pursuits and spiritual backgrounds. The sample was representative of a variety of experiences: cultural background, sexual orientation, religious orientation, and level of involvement in, and type of physical activity, sport, martial arts or dance. I explore each of these categories in greater depth regarding the sample and its specific characteristics in Chapter Three.

Ethical Considerations

I outlined the conditions of participation and guaranteed each participant's privacy in the e-mail consent form. This information included the statement that each women's involvement in sharing of information was voluntary, and that withdrawal was possible at any stage of the research at their request. In turn, I guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. Furthermore, I was able to check the individual responses and the interpretation of these within the context of the narrative e-mail dialogue with participants. I did not release any information prior to the conclusion and approval and publication of my thesis. As I feel it is important that the women involved in the research are able to take away at least as much as they contributed, I have made my results available on the World Wide Web and have contacted all participants with the http address so that they can access the information.

Chapter 2. Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the methodologies of the research. My decision to use both qualitative and quantitative methods is justified, and I explain how both are suited for examining the topic at hand. Although the methodological models that informed my data collection were standard qualitative and quantitative methods, the practical methods that I used to gather data were novel. Living in an isolated, fly-in Native reserve in northern Alberta necessitated conducting this research using new, experimental methods. I outline several reasons for choosing to use the Internet for the research, and the various ways I used its power for communication to reach women effectively. The research question suits this new technology as it permits participants from around the world, and from different walks of life, to privately explore and share their personal experiences. I believe that the research methods and data collection that I employed are especially suitable for women, as research conducted through computer mediated communication such as e-mail and web forms has been shown to promote equality in communication.

Combined Qualitative and Quantitative Methodology

This study merited both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Creswell outlines five key purposes for combining qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study (1995). *Triangulation* aims to bring the data together through convergence. In my study, simultaneous data triangulation was used to neutralize any biases present in one form of data (Henderson, 1991). *Complementing* qualitative methodology with quantitative methodology allowed for overlapping observations and the emergence of new aspects of the research. In the case of my research, the narratives of women's experience were complemented by the depth of experience and categorization offered in Hood's Scale of Mysticism (Hood, 1975, pp. 29-41). As spirituality is a loosely defined term, the quantitative scale, which identifies eight categories of experiences, aided in the *development* of a complementary framework for the interpretation of each woman's experiences. By using qualitative and quantitative

methods, I was able to *initiate* fresh perspectives and examine possible contradictions. Using combined methods added scope and breadth and *expanded* the range of this study.

Qualitative Research Methods

Traditionally, qualitative research has involved person-to-person interaction between the researcher and the participant. In my research, however, I never met any of the participants. Instead, I researched women's experiences in physical activity, sport, martial arts and dance, through a dialogue conducted via web-page forms and e-mail.

The question of women's experiences of physical activity and spirituality was investigated through written narrative accounts. I asked participants to relate their stories using the narrative form. This form differs from traditional interviews in that the participants tell their personal story rather than responding to set questions posed by the researcher. According to Polkinghorne, "Narrative is the primary form through which human experience can be made meaningful" (1988 pp. 15-16, 157-158). This form allows a woman not only to tell her own story, but to give its interpretation at the same time. "Story-telling" is the closest we can come to the experience; it has a sense of being full, and comes out of a personal and social history (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994, pp.413-426). My narratives were gathered using blank text boxes, with appropriate instructions, on the first and second web pages (see Appendix B and C).

Stace's research on religious and mystical experiences determined eight common themes (1960). I used Stace's eight categories of mystical experience and showed how each one was identified repeatedly by the women in the study. These categories are Ego Quality, Unifying Quality, Inner Subjective Quality, Temporal/ Spatial Quality, Noetic Quality, Ineffability, Positive Affect and Religious Quality. Based on my earlier pilot study, I knew that these themes provided an accurate method by which to begin to examine the women's narratives. I expanded on this by looking more deeply at other concepts of spirituality that were identified, specific to the women's experiences in physical activities, sport, martial arts and dance: the feeling of connection; religious interpretation by religious women; the relation of the setting; the experience as part a solo participant, with a partner or a group; the

competitive versus non-competitive nature; the feelings of being physically exhausted/ refreshed; the loss of fear; women-specific experiences; and life-changing stories.

Hood used Stace's conceptualization of mysticism in order to conduct empirical research on religious experiences. He stated at the outset of his study that he considered mysticism to be "the basic experiential core of human religious experience" (Hood, 1975, p.29). He developed a thirty-two-point Likert scale as a starting point for empirical research on this topic.

Quantitative Research Methods

In order to collect quantitative data I used Hood's Scale of Mysticism (Hood, 1975, pp. 29-41). This scale identifies eight components of a religious/ mystical experience. These are Ego Quality, Unifying Quality, Inner Subjective Quality, Temporal/ Spatial Quality, Noetic Quality, Ineffability, Positive Affect and Religious Quality. The following definitions, proposed by Stace, were used to build the scale; four questions were asked in relation to each component.

Ego Quality refers to the experience of a loss of sense of self while consciousness is, nevertheless, maintained. The loss of self is commonly experienced as an absorption into something greater than the mere empirical ego.

Unifying Quality refers to the experience of the multiplicity of objects of perception as being, nevertheless united. Everything is, in fact, perceived as one.

Inner Subjective Quality refers to the perception of an inner subjectivity to all things, even those usually experienced in purely material forms.

Temporal/ Spatial Quality refers to the temporal and spatial parameters of the experience. Essentially, both time and space are modified, with the extreme being an experience that is both "timeless" and "spaceless."

Noetic Quality refers to the experience as a source of valid knowledge. Emphasis is on a non-rational, intuitive, insightful experience that is, nevertheless, recognized as not being merely subjective.

Ineffability refers to the impossibility of expressing the experience in conventional language. The experience simply cannot be put into words due to the nature of the experience itself, not to the linguistic capability of the subject.

Positive Affect refers to the positive affective quality of the experience. Typically the experience is of joy or blissful happiness.

Religious Quality refers to the intrinsic sacredness of the experience. This includes feelings of mystery, awe and reverence that may, nevertheless, be expressed independently of traditional religious language.

The descriptors provided by Hood's Scale of Mysticism are appropriate for addressing and interpreting spiritual experiences in physical activity, sports, martial arts and dance. The scale quantitatively informs the research by adding a raw experiential component and the interpreted component of religious experience. As well as quantitatively confirming that sport is, indeed, experienced as mystical and spiritual, it allows for a deeper investigation of the specific components that make sport spiritual. Furthermore, the scale shows empirically the contribution of each factor to the total mysticism (M) score. Hood's Scale of Mysticism is useful in determining the comparative depth and intensity of various experiences. Each of the eight categories that comprise Hood's Scale of Mysticism relates to the content of women's experience from my previous research, as is indicated in the following examples.

Spirituality was described as a unitive experience by the women; they said that they felt that everything is connected into a single whole. The women involved described the subjective presence of spirituality through a feeling that the perceived whole is itself conscious and aware. They had difficulty putting their experience into words, described by Hood as "Ineffability." One participant mentioned that, when the timing was perfect and everything was synchronized, there was no time and no space. According to Hood's scale this would be classified as having a temporal/ spatial quality to the religious experience. Another participant spoke of realizing her place in the "grand scheme of things," identified by Hood as a Unifying Quality.

The Use of Internet Technologies

The first World Wide Web user survey was completed in 1994. The survey was done on the web, as it was found to be the most convenient way to find web users (GVU's WWW Surveying Team, 1994, Web Page). In my surfing adventures in early 1997, I found several examples of web research. They ranged from forms for personal demographic information and public relations for companies, to personal hobbies such as ghost sightings, and research for academe (Metlife Inc. 1997, Web Page, Boiling, 1996, Web Page, Ludwig, 1997, Web Page). Since that time, I have also discovered the occasional graduate project using computer-based research methods (Coolican, 1997). There are also institutes dedicated to studying this form of communication (Communication Institute for Online Scholarship, 1996, Web Page).

Some of the benefits of using electronic mail (or electronic mail surveys) are its speed, world-wide range, and low cost. It can be effectively used to remind individuals or a group of participants about their involvement, and their continued importance to the research. Another benefit of electronic mail, worthy of note from a feminist perspective, is that it promotes equality. Each person involved is allowed to "have their say"; it enables monologue without interruption (Palme, 1995). The downside of electronic mail and other forms of CMC (computer-mediated communication) is the lack of body language, voice inflection and facial expression available to the researcher.

There are many more benefits for conducting qualitative research with the use of a computer and, in this case, through the medium of a web page. Traditional qualitative research is labour intensive; it can involve interviewing, transcribing, and extensive paperwork. Qualitative research conducted directly by computer eliminates many time-consuming procedures, thereby allowing the research to concentrate on the message and its meaning. It has been shown that survey results done on a computer are less affected by social desirability responses than those done with pen and paper. Furthermore, many individuals perceive responses inputted to a computer to be more confidential than those recorded by means of a typical pen and paper form (De Leeuw and Nicholls, 1996, Web Page).

I was able to solicit participants and keep in contact with them entirely through CMC via the Internet. I relied on asynchronous CMC to interact with participants; this is to say, I

did not interact with participants in real time. As a result, participants had less response pressure, more time to think about their answers, and typing skills were not a factor (Ebbelink, 1997, Web Page). My research using the World Wide Web involved several steps. Firstly, I used electronic mail to post to several listservs to announce my study and find participants. Secondly, women were directed to the Index Web Page (see Appendix A) and then to Part One of the Research Web Page (see Appendix B) where interested participants were requested to leave some general information about themselves, their background in physical activities and spirituality, and a brief summary of their experiences of spirituality in physical activities. Finally, women who were selected to participate in the full study, based on their preliminary responses, were directed to Part Two, where they were prompted to give a narrative account of their experience, and to rate their experience according to Hood's Scale of Mysticism, using a simple thirty-two-question Likert scale (see Appendix C).

The web page was programmed so that participant submissions were automatically sent to my e-mail account. Each participant had the possibility of being uniquely identified on-screen by means of a single host name and IP address. With the use of recent technologies, every activity a user does while at a site can be traced. The narrative account form and Hood's Scale of Mysticism pages were password-protected, so that only those participants who were selected from the initial survey had access to the second web page for Part Two of the data collection.

Data Collection

Data collection involved four steps. First, I posted solicitations, including a hypertext link to the research web page, to various listservs related to women, sports, or spirituality. Second, women volunteered by visiting the web page and entering background information about themselves and the nature of their experiences. Third, personal e-mail with each of the participants facilitated a fast exchange of consent forms, personal security passwords, and thank you notes, as well as other comments and questions from the participants. Finally, the selected participants visited the second part of the web page, which was individually

programmed with each participant's name and e-mail, filled in a narrative account of their experience, and completed Hood's Scale of Mysticism, a thirty-two-item questionnaire.

Selection of Participants

Participants were located by posting research solicitations to listservs and a web magazine (e-zine) relating to sports, spirituality and women. I chose these venues based on search engine results of topics including women, physical activities, and spirituality; for example, WISHPERD (Women in Sports, Health and Physical Education, Recreation and Dance), WMSPRT (Woman's Spirit), and USPE (United States Physical Education Teachers). Each post included a hypertext link to the index research web page, as well as my e-mail address for individuals whose computers did not support browsers or graphics. As the web page address was not submitted to any search engines, all those arriving at the site and leaving information had already viewed my participant request form and hypertext link.

Web Research Introduction

This index page included a brief synopsis about the research and its purposes. Interested participants were encouraged to register by clicking on the "Part One" button graphic to enter the first part of the research (see Appendix A).

Web Research Part One

On this page, participants were requested to include general information about themselves, such as their religious affiliation, and the sports in which they were involved. I also asked that they include a paragraph-length introductory description about their experiences of spirituality in physical activities (see Appendix B). Submission of this form was noted as a confirmation of the participant's interest in the study, and their informed consent. However, I also sent an e-mail letter of confirmation to each participant, into which they typed their name and returned the mail from their personal address to confirm their involvement in the research (see Appendix D).

Web Research Part Two

Qualitative

Women who were selected from Part One of the research web page were given a username and password, with which they were able to gain access to the second part of the data collection (see Appendix C). They were asked to give a written narrative account of their experience(s) in as much detail as possible. Since the responses were not anonymous, I was able to contact the women when I required further explanation or a deeper understanding of their experiences. I used the narratives to document the experiences of women's connection of physical activities and spirituality, as well as to investigate the different ways in which this connection occurs. I gained an understanding of the personal significance and meaning of the experience from the women, and investigated the similarities and differences across spiritual and physical activity backgrounds.

Quantitative

In the second, and less dominant, part of the data collection, the participants responded to Hood's Scale of Mysticism as it related to their experiences of physical activity and spirituality. This scale provided information on the various spiritual aspects of the experience. Women ranked their experience on a scale from (-2) = not applying to their experience at all to (+2) = definitely applying to their experience. I then calculated the (M) mysticism score, according to the eight key components of spirituality identified by Stace. I used this information to complement women's narratives as a means to further interpret each story.

Obstacles for Web Research

Signed Consent Forms

This part posed a few problems when it came time to satisfying the ethical standards regulations at the University of Alberta. I listed my location for conducting research as cyberspace, rather than an office or room at the university! In standard research, one normally uses paper copies of consent forms which enables hand-written signatures. Obviously this was

NOTE TO USERS

Page(s) missing in number only; text follows. Microfilmed as received.

Page 18

UMI

impossible, and so the process was adapted to an e-mail letter. Each participant was required to receive the letter, type in her name at the end (to substitute for a signature) and send the entire e-mail back from the e-mail address they were using for the study (see Appendix D).

Sex Screening

Many people, including several of my professors, asked if using this technology would permit men to be involved in the research without my knowing, since I would not be seeing the participants. There are two arguments that I used to justify that the research is women-only. The first is that, in traditional face-to-face research, it would be difficult for a man to pose as a woman; it would be necessary for him to come in drag. However, researchers generally assume that participants are who they appear to be: there is no sex testing or proof requirement in this format. Secondly, I left a box open on the questionnaire to select male or female, so that should a male desire to fill out the study, and several did, they could immediately identify themselves. As this project used only volunteers who were willing to give at least thirty minutes of their time without compensation, one would certainly question the motives of someone going through all the work of getting disguised.

Interestingly, I encountered some resistance from both women and men about the restriction of my sample to females. In each case I explained that my field of interest for my Master's degree focussed on women and sports. Nonetheless, many men left their names and e-mail addresses, for the future, in the hope of urging me to conduct a similar study with men.

Spamming Accusations

A researcher soliciting participants via listservs must be careful to follow a few basic rules lest they be accused of various "cyber sins." Generally, the web has remained free of outside policing; however, on listservs, list owners often write their own policies about the function of the list, define appropriate language and conduct, and exercise the right to unsubscribe any member who is not following the rules. In one instance I was accused by a list owner of spamming (mass posting of unsolicited mail) when I posted my call for research participants. In this case, there had been no activity on the list when I introduced myself as

being interested in hearing from practitioners of this particular sport in relation to my study. The owner immediately took my name off the list, notified my web-designer, my supervisor, and the University of Alberta Computing Services, "flaming" (online attack) my research methods. I consulted with the designer, who confirmed that my actions did not constitute spamming, since I was not mass-posting, and my one post was specific to the topic to which the list was devoted. University Computing Services did not see my actions to be in any way unethical or unreasonable either, and had no problem with my solicitation procedures. However, given that the list owner was not sympathetic to my research, I was removed nonetheless.

Benefits of Web Research

Speed and Convenience

Using the web and e-mail for research is faster and more efficient than using traditional research methods. Every phase of the research process is minimized, including the length of time needed to generate a sample and the data collection which transpires at the participants' convenience. Within twenty-four hours of posting solicitations for the projects on three listservs, three women had volunteered by visiting the website and completing the first questionnaire. While the researcher is still dependent on the participant being committed to take the time needed for data collection, in web research this can be done at the leisure of the participant. Furthermore, sending messages to participants to remind them of their continued importance in the study was free, instantaneous, more confidential than a phone call, and unintrusive. One woman completed the entire research process, from volunteering to be involved through to submitting Part Two, in less than forty-eight hours. The average time taken by a participant from start to finish was about one week. This was also extremely convenient for myself as the researcher, as I could log on to the computer once a day and, in less than two hours, easily complete the following tasks: post solicitations to listservs; respond to volunteers by sending e-mail consent forms; assign usernames and passwords to participants; collect and sort submissions; and thank participants for completing the study.

Personal Communication With the Women in the Project; or Why using the Internet was better than interviewing!

Several times, women made comments when they wrote letters, indicating that they were unsure that I was willing to read such in-depth information. One person apologized for writing so much, saying that she was a writer for a living, and addressed the letter "to the person doing the research." Other participants e-mailed me on several occasions to tell me about the holidays that they had been on during the course of the research, and to ask about the teaching job I was about to resume in September. Countless women wished me the best chances of success in writing up the project, and every single person involved wanted to see the results of the study.

I had many positive and encouraging comments from the women, both during the study in the narrative boxes, and on e-mail before and after participating in the study. Also, some of the women involved in the pilot offered some very useful suggestions and gave feedback as to the use of the form for filling in the questions. More than three-quarters of the women who completed the research responded to my thank you notes. Others wrote to me before visiting the web page to let me know that they had heard about the study, and were on their way to complete the first part; some wrote e-mails after completing the study to leave me other personal comments. The following quotes clearly establish that using the web for communication on this project did not create a gap between the participant and the researcher, one that might have been amplified by the actual physical distance. Instead, keeping in touch with participants throughout the week, and sending results and thank you notes, actually helped to foster the feeling, for the participants, of being on the same plane as the researcher:

> Amy: Nice collaborating with you, let me know about the findings you have.
>
> Jacynth: I am pleased to have given you a hand for your study. Many wishes for your thesis. Hoping to see you again – I greet you!

Meanwhile, the nature of correspondence over the Internet did not adversely affect the quality or depth of communication. On several occasions, the women shared deep and

NOTE TO USERS

Page(s) missing in number only; text follows. Microfilmed as received.

Page 22

UMI

personal stories, such as Donna who shared how her fiancee's death had affected her, and how she was coping. Further to this, I was surprised at the actual support and encouragement that the women in the study gave for conducting and completing this study. The following quotes bear witness to this:

> Rachel: I think the topic you have chosen is wonderful. You must be a special person to consider this unique part of sport/ art.
>
> Colleen: You seem inspired by your research so you should do well.
>
> Mair: Your research excites me.

I received many replies to my thank you notes, all of which were positive. In several, the women thanked me for the opportunity to be involved. Everyone who contacted me, and who filled out the surveys, indicated that they wished to be contacted with the results at the completion of the thesis. The women also expressed their enthusiasm at partaking in the research, and said how much they enjoyed being involved:

> Colleen: Thanks for letting me express myself!
>
> Evelyn: I enjoyed filling out your questionnaire.
>
> Joanne: If you have any more questions I would be glad to answer them.
>
> Megan: I enjoyed thinking and speaking about my experiences.
>
> Kim: It was a rare pleasure to answer your questions.

Online Time

I was concerned that some women might not invest the necessary time to type out full accounts of their experiences in Part Two. However, not one participant mentioned the time involved, and everyone seemed to enjoy the task. Furthermore, the time devoted to writing the narrative account was monitored entirely by the participant and each stage of the research was completed at their leisure. Given that at least ten of the eighty-five women involved in the project had little or no Internet experience outside e-mail communication, some of this

might have been due to the novelty of it all. On the other hand, there was lots of room for personal sharing, with comparatively little time spent on filling in answers. Tanya's response shows clear evidence of this: "I enjoyed the questions. They made me even more aware of why I ride [bikes and waves]. If I can answer any more questions, just e-mail me. Thanks."

For the majority of the women involved, their experiences in sport and spirituality had yet to be accessed. The women were glad to be able to share on this subject, and to do so in a novel way. Veronica, for instance, sent a long letter about her experiences. She complained about having spent countless hours on the web looking for information on a fitness/ wellness/ spirituality connection when she stumbled upon a link to my research. As a result she wrote, "I thank you for wanting to explore this topic. I am very interested."

Unexpected assistance

Jo Sutton, in her article "Arguments About Getting Online (Or Not)," writes that "Online women are remarkably supportive and helpful to other women, going out of their way to be nonjudgmental and encouraging to others" (1995, p.15). I certainly found this to be true in this study, not only of the women who participated in the research, but also concerning men, who often passed my solicitation along to women who they knew would be interested. For instance, after I posted to a disabled sports list, a coach asked permission to e-mail my request for participants to his swimmers. Two others offered to write up the call for participants in paper-form newsletters for their sporting body, and another volunteered to translate the survey for two women who did not speak English. However, as this research was structured around data collection on the web, I was not able to use these other methods for participant calls or contact. Several women sent e-mail instructions with subscription information for other listservs where they thought I would find volunteers; for example, after posting to a martial arts list and a Baha'i list, women wrote back to inform me of specific women-only martial arts and Baha'i listservs. I believe that I was helped in such a way, one that is certainly not the norm in traditional research, partly because contacting, replying and forwarding messages is so easy, and, partly, because the very nature of listservs is to share information and ideas.

Conclusion

The choice of combined qualitative and quantitative methods is especially suitable for the research topic and the new Internet technology being employed. In future studies using Internet technology, I believe it would be worthwhile to include two additional questions for participants. Although they do not relate explicitly to the subject of the research, they do inform the type of sample population that is involved. The first relates to how a participant had access to the Internet and e-mail, be it through an educational institution, public library, personal home computer or otherwise. The second is the economic level of the participants, given that the sample is restricted to those with computer access. This information would determine if the study was made up of upper/ middle-class, financially secure women, or if it was mixed, as a large proportion of students now have some Internet access available. Although the use of Internet technologies for research purposes does present occasional barriers, the benefits far outweigh the obstacles.

Not only is research conducted on the Internet beneficial for the researcher, many of the participants responded extremely positively, despite the absence of a personal face-to-face meeting. As people are becoming more familiar with Internet technologies, it is no longer necessary to meet a person in order to build feelings of trust, security, or to provide the virtual anonymity that seems to make sharing very personal things easier. I believe that using the Internet fostered the personal involvement and interest of each participant to such a level that every single person wanted to be contacted about the study and left an e-mail address with the exception of one woman, who arranged for a snail mail announcement about the findings.

Chapter 3. Participant Characteristics

Introduction

The methodology that was employed to complete this research is pro-active and technologically in line with the demands of a new age in which physical boundaries are quickly being eliminated. The methodology affected the sample of participants in many ways. Only women who had web access and were involved in the selected listservs or web e-zine, could be involved in the study, therefore limiting the possible research population to computer-literate women who had access, to an e-mail address. However, given the number of people that do have web access, and considering that each day the numbers of people who are using the World Wide Web is growing exponentially, this is surely an ideal place for contacting and conducting research in the future. Although women only accounted for 5 % of Internet users in 1994, the figure is currently nearly 40% according to the GVU's WWW User Survey Team (1997, Web Page). The Internet is an exciting place because it is one place where women of all ages, races, and religions can come together and learn together (Littleton, 1997, p.12). This participant pool is largely untapped. I believe it is an especially appropriate and ideal place from which to solicit participants on specialised topics. Furthermore, in conducting research via the World Wide Web, there is a possibility of having participants from around the globe. During this research, I was able to involve women from twelve countries.

The following quote from the Canadian women's Internet magazine, *Women 'space*, sums up the importance of using information technology which I have applied specifically to my research (Pollock and Sutton, 1997, p.33):

> Let's explore together the power which we can generate through our use of information technology. How will we make our voices heard and our concerns more visible? Let's use the global networking made possible through this technology to share our experiences, to understand diverse perspectives on women's issues, to develop activities in solidarity with our sisters and to strengthen the impact of our organizing.

By conducting research using new technology, I have gained access to women's experiences in order to record their experiences. In this chapter I outline the full range of activities involved in the research process, from posting solicitations to thanking participants for their involvement. This includes the choosing of related listservs, and comments regarding the personal communication I had with volunteers. I also discuss the rationale I used to select the final twenty-six participants who formed the sub-group. I conclude with a complete description of the participant characteristics of the research group and sub-group, of which I examine the occupation, citizenship, sporting activities, sexual orientation, religious orientation and presence/ absence of a disability of the women involved in the research.

Soliciting participants

I started by posting a solicitation for research participants to lists of which I was a member, or had been a member in the past, for example, USPE- l (United States Physical Educators List), and WMSPRT (Women's Spirituality). I then used various web pages with listserv search engines to search for lists that contained the topic of sports, women or spirituality (L-soft, 1997, Web Page). There were several results such as Maiden-l (Canadian Women), and WRUGBY (Women's Rugby). Since each listserv can carry many lists, after I sent a subscription command for a particular list to the listserv, I also sent the command "lists". Within two minutes I received an e-mail with a list of other lists carried by the listserv, often on related topics.

After subscribing to Sportpc (the use of computers in sports), I was also able to find a list pertaining to athletes with disabilities that was hosted by the same listserv. It is difficult to guess the number of people who received the solicitations, as not all lists supplied their membership figures. The lists that did provide an indication of the number of members typically ranged from between fifteen and four hundred members.

Solicitation

The following is an example of the posting that I made to the various lists. This posting was made to the GASP-l (Gulf Area Sea Paddlers)-list.

Date: Tue 22 July 1997
From: Deborah Hambly <dhambly@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca>
To: gasp@lists.intelenet.net
Subject: GASP! Women's Spirituality and Sea Kayaking?

I am new to the list, and unfortunately I don't think I will be able to make it to your part of this beautiful watery world until I finish my degree! In the meantime, I am working on research on the topic of "spiritual experiences of women in physical activity, sport, martial arts and dance." I am interested in hearing from any kayakers or other sea-bound women who have had an experience of spirituality. Participation in this study would involve no more than 30 minutes of your time, at your leisure – so you won't lose much paddling time! If you would like to be involved, please visit the following web page and fill out Part 1 of the survey.
Thanks for your help!

****

Deborah Hambly mailto:dhambly@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca

/ \ Spiritual Experiences of Women in
_/ Physical Activity, Sport, Martial Arts and Dance
+ Master's Thesis Research

Please take a few minutes to participate:
<http://www.wileyweb.com/sportspirit>
****

As I was not using a netscape program that was connected to my personal e-mail, subscribing and unsubscribing from these lists was a more tedious job than from my own computer set-up where I could subscribe and unsubscribe online through a programmed web page. Instead, I had to copy each address down with subscription information, send the e-mail, and reply to the response rather than just use interactive subscription software.

Lists with lots of responses:

There were a few lists from which I received up to five or more responses. These included Walklist, kiai (women's martial arts) and skydiving. This is partly due to a large number of subscribers with these lists, and perhaps to the particular interest that one group

of athletes had in relation to the topic at hand. In the case of skydiving, I had several women write about the spiritual feeling they experienced while in free-fall, and although there were differences in each story, the essential element was that of the feeling of freedom and control over one's mortality. An experience of falling towards one's death if no action was taken seemed, in this case, to be particularly conducive to imminent spiritual thoughts.

Lists with few or no responses:

I received the least responses from women on lists for specific countries, such as South-East Asian women, likely because their femaleness would be the only connecting factor to my study, as opposed to a list pertaining to sports or a list relating to spirituality where women held a proportion of the membership. The winter sport lists that I posted to such Brooms-l (Broomball) were basically inactive during the summer months.

Web Zine

My research was highlighted in the August edition of the online magazine "Go Girl" (Jowan, 1997, Web Page). There were at least eight women who responded to this article. This was more effective than an individual listserv as the number of women surfing this web site was high, and it was less intrusive than posting to a list, and having my call for participants sent to each individual subscriber.

Women and Internet Technology

Two out of the first five women who volunteered for the study either did not have web access or had never used the web before, although they had e-mail accounts. Only four others in the remainder of the study requested to have e-mail copies of the web page sent as they said they were " hopeless at the web," or had no web access. In three of these cases the women were connected from outside North America (Australia, New Zealand and Yugoslavia), where Internet access and browser support may be at a different technological level for home users.

I lost e-mail connection with only two of the eighty-odd women in the study. In these cases, the messages that I sent using the default e-mail reply function, or e-mail address that these participants had manually keyed into the Part One questionnaire were returned as unsendable.

Although several participants preferred to complete the study in the "cut and paste" mode of e-mail, rather than online, this research also prompted women to explore functions that I had not previously tried. For example, Trish, upon seeing my solicitation article on the web e-zine, wrote, "I have never sent e-mail from the web. I hope this works."

Participant Characteristics

In this section I address the characteristics of the women in the sample in relation to occupation, sporting activity, citizenship, sexual orientation, religious involvement, and physical disabilities. One needs to be aware that "our diversity online reflects our population" (Pollock and Sutton, 1997, p. 31). When conducting research using the Internet, the researcher may be prevented from making some false assumptions; according to Jo Sutton, women online "make few prejudgments of each other, since what we know is what we write. Race, levels of ability, and sexual orientation are not revealed unless we want to discuss them" (Sutton, 1997, p.15). However, judgments are made, I believe, based on different things. I did not see my participants, but I was guilty myself, on at least one occasion, of making judgments. Although I had seen one woman's responses for the first web page, which indicated that she was sixty-five years old and paraplegic, I forgot this, and inadvertently assumed, based on her experiences as a coach and swimmer like myself, that she was around my age or older, but certainly not of retiring age. When I re-read her account later, I found myself shocked that, although I had evidence from which to form an image in my mind, I had mistakenly dismissed what made us different and assumed that she was "like me."

Eighty-five women were involved in this study from start to finish. Out of this number, twenty-six women who had completed Part Two of the research were selected for further analysis. This sub-group of women was chosen based on their ability to express

themselves, their desire to be involved in the full scope of the research, the variety of their experiences, in sport as well as religious orientation, sexual orientation, country of residence and ability/ disability.

I used the sub-group of women to inform the results for statistical analysis of Hood's Scale of Mysticism, and for the thematic category examples provided by Stace (Chapter Four, Sections Two and Four,). As not all the women went on to complete the second part of the survey, but many still included lengthy narratives and personal experiences that related exactly to this study, I included their responses in the secondary emerging themes that were examined (Chapter Four, Section One, Three and Five). In the following section, I examine several characteristics of the total group of eighty-five women, followed by the characteristics of the sub-group.

Occupation

Women involved in this project all had personal access to the Internet and a personal e-mail account. One could, therefore, postulate that the women who participated in this study were in a higher socio-economic group. Therefore, it needs to be clearly noted that the women who took part in this study were not representative of all women. Rather, this group was a unique blend of women, some of whom were technologically advanced, others who were fearful of getting lost in cyberspace. The participants all belonged to one of the three following work groups: computing related, teachers/ coaches and students, and professionals.

In my thank you note I asked women who completed Part Two about their occupation, and received more than thirty responses. Several women worked with computers or in computing-related fields, in jobs such as computer-marketing, managing a computer communications business, computer consulting, and telecommuting. Of the students, six were at the graduate level, and five were undergraduates. The six teachers from among the participants were involved with teaching from the elementary level through to college level and included teachers of specific physical activities. In addition, two coaches participated, one of whom had coached and competed at the national level. The professional category included

women who worked in the following occupations: nurse, public health administrator, psychologist, engineer, editor and writer.

More than a third of the respondents were students or teachers. This is not surprising as the educational system has been responsible for increasing the access to the Internet for students and staff. It is also not surprising to find such a large number of women from the field of computing. Interestingly, none of the participants listed being unemployed or looking for work. Several mentioned their volunteer work and the jobs and duties involved in raising children, and being active in their families.

Country of Residence

I had hoped to have an international sample with somewhat equal representation from numerous countries. However, after I completed the pilot study, it became quickly obvious that the dominant group of Internet users are from the United States: 70% of Internet users live in the U.S., and this was reflected in my study, as women from the United States represented the largest group in the sample. I believe that I was quite fortunate to find the diversity that I did. In total, twelve countries were represented:

Table One: Country of Residence and Participation

Australia	1
Canada	8
Egypt	1
Germany	2
Italy	1
Japan	1
New Zealand	1
Serbia	1
Sweden	1
Taiwan	1
United Kingdom	1
United States	62

Sporting Activities

The following sporting activities were listed as the primary sport through which participants experienced spirituality in sport. Most of the women also listed that they were involved in at least two other sports. It became obvious that the experience of spirituality in sporting activity is prevalent across all forms of physical activity, sport, martial arts and dance. Women involved in almost every imaginable sport reported experiences of spirituality. These have been divided into Dance, Martial Arts, Water Sports, Team or Dual Sports, Outdoor and Winter Sports, Extreme and Individual Sports:

Dance: (ballroom, trance, ballet, cheerleading, aerobics

Martial Arts (aikido, tae kwon doe, nia technique, karate, yoga, tai ji, kyusho tu, bangua

Water sports: swimming, windsurfing, kayaking (traditional and sea), scuba diving, aquafit, sailing, body boarding, surfing, rowing, snorkelling

Team or Dual Sports: softball, soccer, volleyball, tennis, croquet, cricket, basketball, golf, lawn bowling and fencing

Outdoor: hiking, backpacking, equestrian

Winter Sports: cross-country and downhill skiing

Extreme Sports: skydiving, mountain climbing

Individual Sports: running, cycling (road and mountain biking), rollerblading, walking, athletics, orienteering, exercise videos, weight training

Sexual Orientation

Responding to this question was optional. However, out of the eighty-five participants who completed Part One of the research, over 10% indicated that they were exclusively involved with women, and another 5% indicated no preference between men and women. I was encouraged that the women involved felt comfortable and safe enough on the Internet (the first page of the study was not password protected) to leave this information. The remaining 85% of the respondents either did not identify their orientation, or identified themselves as heterosexual.

Religious Involvement:

The largest proportion of women involved in this study were from a Christian background. This was followed by Judaism. There were also two pagans, one Baha'i, one Wiccan, one Christian Science practitioner, and one Muslim woman. A surprising number of participants left this column blank; only one listed "agnostic." Several of the women mentioned in their narratives that they were involved in spiritual leadership, for example, one woman was in Rabbinical school, and another led a women's spirituality group.

Disabilities

A number of the women who participated enjoyed sport on a regular basis in spite of a disability. These included a paraplegic swimmer, two dancers, one with Graves' disease, one with asthma, and a sky diver with artificial hips.

Sub-Group Participant Characteristics

Twenty-six women were selected for inclusion in the sub-sample. These women all completed Parts One and Two of the web research forms, filled out a large narrative text, and completed Hood's Scale of Mysticism. The participants ranged in age from eighteen to sixty-five with the average age being in the thirty-five to forty years age range. In the following sections, I examine the characteristics of the women in the sub-group according to sport, sport proficiency, country of origin, sexual orientation, religious background and disabilities.

Sports

Within the sub-group, there were six women involved in various forms of dance, and six involved in various types of martial arts. Four women were involved in kayaking and windsurfing, and two were involved with either mountain biking or cycling. There was one swimmer, one runner, one cross-country skier, one horseback rider, one hiker, one woman who competed in orienteering, one volleyball player, and a croquet player.

Sport Proficiency

Within this group were four women who had achieved a high level of proficiency within their sports. This included women who had competed at national tournaments, or who were considered to be professional.

Country of Residence

Three of the women resided in Canada, one was Swedish, one was from Taiwan, and twenty-one lived in the United States.

Sexual Orientation

The percentages of women identifying as bisexual and lesbian in the sub-group were maintained: there were two bisexual women, and three lesbians.

Religious Orientation

In the sub-group, fourteen of a possible twenty-six women left this column blank. Two women followed Judaism, six were Christians, one was Muslim and one was agnostic.

Disabilities

The sub-group included a women who was a paraplegic, and another who had Graves' disease.

Chapter 4. Data Analysis

Section One: Introduction and definitions

In the following chapter, I explain the data analysis I conducted using the women's narratives and Hood's Scale of Mysticism (Hood, 1975, pp.29-41). I begin by summarizing the results from eighty-five women who completed the first web page questionnaire. Secondly, using the eight categories provided by Hood, I give examples of how spirituality was experienced in physical activity in each of the previously-identified mystical components. Although using Hood's components covered most of the categories which best encompassed women's stories, several other themes experienced by women in relation to physical activity and spirituality required further individual documentation. I investigate the following areas in the third section: connectivity, specific women-centred stories, beautiful illustrations, the loss of fear, the relevance of the setting, and the differences between competitive and non-competitive sport settings. Following this, I provide a brief overview of the quantitative results of the second web page and Hood's Scale of Mysticism, and provide a comparison between my results and the results that Hood obtained from his sample. Finally, I tie these qualitative and quantitative results together to summarize the results of the research.

Before analysing the results of the first web page, it is important to highlight the specific definitions offered by the women in this study about the nature of their spirituality, and the scope of physical activities, sports, martial arts and dance that were included in the study.

Spirituality

Although I did not ask the women involved in the research to specifically define their spirituality, as I had done in previous pilot studies, many women volunteered comments and insights on their personal definitions. There was a clear distinction between religious orientation and spirituality. Nearly half of the women involved did not list a religious orientation, and yet every single participant noted feelings of spirituality while exercising. On the other hand, for those participants who did list a strong religious affiliation, their spiritual

experiences were clearly influenced by it. Many of the women included definitions of what spirituality was not, alongside their definitions of what it meant for them. For example, Geeta explained,

> Spirituality is a contact with God. I take it as a full contact with my inner side of me. Spirituality is when I feel calm, in peace and in joy. It is not a vision of an angel, or hearing the voice of God, or being counselled by an invisible force. I don't believe in those. I believe that an individual can make a difference, and by making those differences and helping others or himself [sic], the person can gain a high level of spirituality. In that perspective, I've been seriously exercising for three years now.

Joanne wrote, "The amazing experience of being at one with the water, the waves, the earth herself in nature, is my idea of spirituality." Another participant, Beatrix, wrote succinctly that "Water is my spirituality" and, since she is an avid snorkler, swimmer, and boater, the link with sports is easy to see.

Physical activity, sport, martial arts and dance

Two of the women involved in this research were curious with regard to women's experiences in activities such as gardening and food preparation, and their possible link to spirituality. While I believe that these activities are fine venues for the experience of spirituality, and are most certainly physical, these topics do not fall into the scope or range of this study. Under the definition that was outlined in Chapter One, I was forced to omit only one submission as it did not meet the above criteria.[1] Within this definition, however, I was able to involve and incorporate women who were involved in an extremely wide range of physical activities.[2]

---

[1]For further information on women's spirituality in non-traditional venues, see Harris, M. (1989). *Dance of the Spirit*. Toronto: Bantam Books. pp. 1-27.

[2] Isla left the following comment: If sport is some sort of strenuous form of physical activity, then praying does not apply; neither does meditation or some forms of yoga. But to me these things are also sport since they place our bodies in forms and shapes which we don"t normally take. Besides, it is believed that certain prayers (for example, the Muslim ones) were prescribed as a form of daily exercise (in fact, the early prayers which are performed before sunrise are so refreshing, my joints always pop: they are waking up!)

Section Two: Results from the first web page

After arriving at the index web page, women who were interested in being involved "clicked on" Part One to go to the first questionnaire. On it were listed sixteen general questions, and a space for a few lines about their experiences. In the section on participant characteristics in Chapter Two, I outlined the following six characteristics which were reported earlier in this section: age, country, religion, primary physical activity, disability and sexual orientation. In this section, I examine the remaining nine items from this questionnaire, as well as the preliminary experiential comments.

Name and e-mail

This research was not anonymous as the exchange of names and e-mail addresses was required for sending informed consent e-mails, passwords and thank-you notes. In another sense, however, it could be considered "virtually" anonymous. Although I knew each woman by name, and age, and many had shared very personal stories with me, I never met face-to-face with any of them. Furthermore, the only way I could get in touch with participants was via e-mail; I did not need the phone numbers or addresses that are often required in order to contact participants for research interviewing, and which are, to a degree, more invasive. E-mail is fairly non-invasive as participants are never put on the spot to respond, as may be the case when using a phone, and one can choose to ignore the message, not respond to it, or delete it! The only contact point between myself (the researcher) and the participants was the e-mail name that I had been given by the participants. Even this exchange was completely controlled. As each participant joined the study, she was assigned a research number and a file in my e-mail account in which all of her responses, and my correspondence, were saved. At the time of printing the thesis, these coded numbers were removed and exchanged for aliases. These aliases were assigned in alphabetic order according to the research number of each participant to facilitate easy referencing considering the large sample number (for example, r1 Abigail, r2 Alice, r3 Amy).

Gender

Although this study was designed for women only, this item was included so that there would be space for men to honestly complete the form as well, without altering the sample. Several men did write and ask permission to fill out the survey for future use.

Had a spiritual experience?

Every person who filled in the questionnaire in Part One, confirmed that they had had a spiritual experience while engaging in physical activity, sport, dance or the martial arts.

Physical activity alone or with a group?

The most common response for physical activity alone or with a group was, not surprisingly, the category "both"(55%). Another 9% listed that they participated in their activity only in a group and 36% listed that they engaged in their sport or physical activity alone. Several women mentioned that it was important to be alone in order to have a spiritual experience, while others listed the group force and the presence of another person or group of people as an important factor in the experience. I discuss the subject of group versus individual settings in Section Three, and explore how the difference in the experience of spirituality varies from woman to woman.

Table Two. Years in physical activity

number of women	years in physical activity
13	1-2 years
13	3-4 years
16	5-10 years
25	11-19 years
16	20 years or more

It was difficult to analyse the results of this question, since, in many cases, the ages of the women largely affected how many years they had been involved in a sport. For example, an eighteen year old listed being involved in soccer for three years, while a sixty-five

year old swimmer listed participation for at least fifty years. Therefore, the number of years that women had been engaged in their physical activity was, in most cases, more a function of their age than of anything else. However, there is still some useful information to be gained from the results. Although forty-one women had been involved in their activity for more than ten years, twenty-six of the women had taken up their particular activity in the last four years, and half of this number within the last two years.

Time per session and time per week

As was discussed in the last sub-section, having participated in a sport for many years was not necessarily a precursor to having a spiritual experience, as is evidenced by the women who had a spiritual experience early on in their exposure to a sport. This category proved to be a reflection of the type of sport that each woman was engaged in, and only a mere indication of the level of involvement. The sky diver pointed out that this was likely to be erroneous concerning her situation; her time per session was about sixty seconds in the case of a free fall, but she felt very lucky that she was able to repeat this sixty seconds up to ten times per week.

Other physical activities

In Chapter Three, I addressed the wide range of physical activities in which spiritual experiences occurred. In this section, I asked if there were any other physical activities in which participants were also involved. The majority of the women involved in the study were involved in at least two or three other physical activities. Many times these activities were related to the primary activity, such as various forms of martial arts, different types of dancing, or several water sports. Overall, most of the physical activities listed under the category of "other physical activities" were also listed as primary sports by other participants. The following physical activities and sports were listed only as secondary sports by participants: exercise tapes, tennis, golf and aquafit. In retrospect, it would have been better to have asked participants to list the other physical activities, if any, in which they had

experienced spirituality. What can be summarized from these responses is that this group was active, athletic, and participated in a wide range of physical activities.

Times worshipping

As with the previous two questions, the responses of many participants proved difficult to interpret. For women in certain religious groups, there was a defined amount of time set aside every day for worship, whereas for others, worship was free-flowing and could occur any time, or was continuous, throughout the day. For example, Annette, who was aware that she was one of the first to fill out the web questionnaire, as a web programmer herself, wondered about the use of this question based on her experiences: "I don't set aside a particular time for it: many years of involvement in a twelve-step program have taught me much about the concept of conscious contact with a higher power."

Description of experience

This section was used to get a brief idea as to the nature of the spiritual experience that each woman had while engaging in physical activity, sport, martial arts or dance. It was also helpful in selecting which women would be included in the main part of the research, and who would, therefore, continue on to complete the second part of the study. Only two women left this section blank; all the others wrote descriptions ranging in length from one line up to one and a half pages, as the space was basically unlimited. Heather, a college sprinter commented, "Only one paragraph? I could write pages!" Although some women pre-empted the narrative account in the second web page and shared their experiences in great depth in this area, most of the comments were concise and well-expressed. In two or three sentences, many of the women highlighted several of the themes addressed in Hood's Scale of Mysticism, as well as several other categories that emerged. Additionally, some of the women left words of wisdom and guiding principles that were quite moving. So, although at this point in the study I was interested in just getting a glimpse of the experiences of each woman, most were eager to share and managed to summarize their situations very effectively. As a result, after receiving the responses from Part One, it was already obvious that using the web page

for communication with women for the purposes of this study was just as effective, if not more effective, than interviewing women face-to-face. Finally, there were no other questions from Part One that were left blank with the exception of Sexual preference, which was listed as optional.

In the following section, I have selected the "Description of experiences" responses from nine women, and have included references to each of Stace's categories in brackets (1960). These will be discussed in depth in the following section, along with the other themes that emerged such as "Connection," "Results," and the "Relation of the setting to the experience."

> Martial Artist
> Charlotte: I am shown a profound interconnection of mind, body and spirit (Connection) which has led me to have several spiritual experiences, in which I have felt the essential oneness (Unifying Quality), unlimited power, and the intermittent ability to "predict" short term future events (Noetic Quality).
>
> Dancer
> Colleen: It is like moving with the rhythm of life, a joy that wells up from inside and makes my whole body smile, sense of awe (Religious Quality), tears of joy, ecstasy, smile smile smile (Positive Affect).
>
> Sea Kayaker
> Donna: Realization of unity, reunion with the sacred (Religious Quality), insight into reality (Noetic Quality) – words don't lend themselves to describing these experiences, maybe that is why they're described as "transcendental," huh? (Ineffability)
>
> Scuba Diver
> Francis: Feeling to be near God underwater changed my whole life (Life-Changing).
>
> Martial Artist
> Pauline: When I attend the Nia technique classes (martial arts and aerobics), I find myself transported (Temporal/ Spatial Quality). It is a wonderful experience (Positive Affect).
>
> Runner and Weight Trainer
> Rowena: Once I get to a certain point in a workout, all stresses seem to disappear, and I feel that I am one with the universe (Unifying and Ego

Quality), that everything is wonderful and good. Nothing else gives me this feeling of fulfilment and peace (Positive Affect).

Martial Artist
Loretta: I am more focussed in my moves and my concentration is sharper. I am also more relaxed and develop an inner sense of peace. By combining the two (spirituality and martial arts – in this case karate), I feel both experiences are heightened.

Skater
Trish: It felt not only euphoric (Positive Affect), but it put me back in touch with Him through total humility. I felt so insignificantly significant! (Ego Quality).

Mountain Biker
Tanya: When I'm biking in the woods, the pine and cedar scent in the air (Setting) ... the challenge of trusting the bike to navigate over and around rocks and roots ... I feel deeply appreciative of the chance to be alive and part of nature (Inner Subjective Quality) so much larger than me, yet in which I'm forever entwined (Ego Quality). There is awe in being part of all this wonder (Religious Quality).

The narratives gathered from this section are analysed in much greater depth in Section Three.

Contacted for the results of the study

Every single person who completed the questionnaire opted to be contacted with the results of the survey. Also, several people wrote about their interest in my work, and, although they were not personally involved, asked to be contacted by e-mail with the hypertext link to the web page containing the results.

Section Three: Stace's Eight Categories

When I was completing a graduate project in 1995, I interviewed four women on the University of Alberta campus on the subject of sport and spiritual integration. This sample consisted of a synchronized swimmer, an Indian dancer, a hiker and a yoga teacher. When I first examined Hood's Scale of Mysticism, it became obvious that the eight categories provided a functional way of organizing the women's experiences while preserving their meaning in full. For example, each of four women I interviewed had difficulty in finding

words to express their experience, and frequently used modifiers such as "like" and "sort of", and paused in an attempt to search for the right words. This experience, and the statement that the women made about the difficulty they were having with expression, was defined precisely by Hood and Stace as Ineffability.

With few exceptions, the women's narratives were easily analysed using the themes identified by Stace, and put into scale form by Hood. The quantitative results of Hood's Scale are discussed in Section Four. The theme that recurred in almost every narrative account was that of Positive Affect. Whatever the spiritual experience did for the women, it was positive, and was expressed with feelings of joy, peace and general happiness. The theme which was reported least often was Inner Subjective Quality. Most of the women touched upon at least three or four categories in their accounts, as well as sharing some very moving experiences and the background information necessary to better understand their perspectives and how the experiences fitted into their lives. If their accounts were best understood through only one or two categories, there was a good likelihood that one of the categories was Positive Affect. In the following eight sections, I investigate and highlight the women's narratives as they relate to each of the sub-categories of mysticism. This demonstrates that, without a doubt, the women's experiences did exhibit characteristics of mysticism and spiritual experiences; it also illuminates the depth of their experiences.

In the following eight sections, I document the women's experiences using the categories of mysticism defined by Stace. These include ego quality, unifying quality, inner subjective quality, temporal/ spatial quality, noetic quality, ineffability, positive affect and religious quality.

Ego Quality

Ego Quality refers to the experience of a loss of sense of self while consciousness is, nevertheless, maintained. The loss of self is commonly experienced as an absorption into something greater than the mere empirical ego.

There were several ways in which women's expressions described the feeling of egolessness. For some, it was an experience of being out of their body, and perhaps not aware

of their immediate surroundings. The result of this was the lack of physical feeling or fatigue, even in the event of a strenuous physical task. This idea is expressed in the following three accounts:

> Chantelle: I've had experiences walking on a beach where my body was almost *not there* – no pain, no discomfort, no real awareness of it – almost a floating consciousness.
>
> Abigail: There have been several occasions where I have gone out on a run and have been so "unconscious" that I didn't recall any aspects of the run – scenery,, weather, other people, etc. I do recall a calm feeling, almost like I wasn't there, but was at a place that was peaceful, calm, passive. It would almost be like I didn't exist in my body, but existed more as a spirit.
>
> Isla: I sensed a sort of "out of bodiness" that was almost frightening, but also beautiful, and completely disconnected from any emotion or thought that I may want to attach to it.

Some women experienced the quality of Egolessness as a physical unconsciousness of sorts, while others expressed it in terms of feeling small and insignificant while, at the same time, feeling connected to the universe:

> Mair: The most powerful experience is one in which I sense myself as being both very small and very large in the universe at the same time during the physical activity.
>
> Joanne: The realization of my own mortality and how small I am in the whole wondrous cycle of life – this was why I'd come.
>
> Isla: Intellectually/ emotionally I felt like the tiniest speck or particle in a vast sea of space/ darkness/ void.

Georgia described what happened when she had a spiritual experience, quite the opposite of what one might expect for a woman making one hundred percent of the basketball shots she took:

> I felt completely humble, completely awed by the experience – not by myself. That egoless feeling I guess I took to be "God's work," not my own. At times like this, I feel egoless ironically. And I take that to be a "higher power" working through me, not ME doing the work. It's a letting go (and letting God, as the twelve-step saying goes). You feel grateful, not arrogant.

The martial artists were particularly descriptive and clear, as the following accounts show:

> Jacqueline: The movements make me feel like a warrior, a peacemaker, a kinga slave, a peasant, a man, a woman, a leader, a follower. I become a part of the universe. It makes me very strong and powerful, but also humble and respectful. For me it is a way of being human, totally.

> Megan: I've found that the forms of Tae Kwon Do put me in a trance-like meditative state. Often it seems as though I can feel the universe moving with me, or as if I have left my body.

At times it was difficult to distinguish whether the women were referring to this category or the next one, Unifying Quality, because "the absorption into something greater" is similar to being unified. I consulted with Hood in order to clarify these two categories, but at the time writing, I have not had a response.[3]

Unifying Quality

Unifying Quality refers to the experience of the multiplicity of objects of perception as being, nevertheless, united. Everything is, in fact, perceived as one.

In the women's narratives, there were many accounts of the feeling of oneness. Often, the women thought "universally"; their descriptions of unity extended beyond their immediate surroundings. Jacqueline stated, " I feel that I am an obvious part of the Universe." At other times, the unifying quality involved the immediate surroundings, as in Jennifer's account: "I become part of the forest. I am no different than the other forest animals, seeing what they see each day, feeling what they feel." The following story, given by, Megan, a Wiccan demonstrates this unitedness which is, backed by her faith:

---

[3] E-mail address: Rhood@cecasun.utc.edu

> I feel a deep sense of communion with all things around me as if everything belongs to one vast entity. It feels as if my movements circle the same centre as the distant planets revolve around. I feel the eternal circle of birth, death and rebirth flowing in an endless current through all things. I feel myself to be a part of the rocks in the ground, following their slow cycles of cooling and forming our planet. I feel myself in the clouds which follow their cycles of weather, endlessly circling from winter to summer. I know at these moments that my feet follow this same path, circling through the cycles, dancing along with everyone and everything. This connectivity comforts me in its infinity and in its eternity.

Often, the feeling of a Unifying Quality was experienced when a participant was engaged out of doors. However, there were some participants who felt that the crowds of people contributed to the feeling instead. The following words were used to describe this category of experience: realization of unity, oneness, connectedness, being part of something greater. Many times in their narratives, women noted why their sport was spiritual, or, rather, they situated the spiritual feeling in direct relation to the unifying quality that they experienced. For example, Hillary said, "It was a spiritual feeling for me because in it was a feeling of oneness with something very big, beyond my comprehension, and very meaningful."

The similarities between the following two accounts by women who are involved in water sports are easily observed. In Section Four, I go into more detail on the nature of the setting to the experience as the water is obviously a factor for both women:

> Chantelle: I often have feelings of oneness of the universe when I kayak, especially when it is the ocean.

> Sherry: Windsurfing is spiritual to me because I feel at one with the water.

Sherry went on to say that she had been practising a meditation technique for about twenty years, and it helped her to create an experience of seeing the world as "one thing, rather than separate parts."

The following accounts demonstrate the unity, interpreted by the participants as obviously spiritual, that is possible with the presence of others:

> Joanne: In volleyball I've felt an entire team move to a different level of playing, as if we had melded into one being moving together with increased harmony and intensity towards its goal. That is an incredibly spiritual feeling.

> Rebeccah: I feel a connectedness to humanity on the dance floor, surrounded by sweaty bodies contorting in orgiastic bliss in time to music.

Inner Subjective Quality

Inner Subjective Quality refers to the perception of an inner subjectivity to all things, even those usually experienced in purely material forms.

Inner Subjective Quality, as defined by Stace and Hood, was described in very interesting ways by women involved in this study. The following example from Chantelle describes her spiritual experience in relation to plant forms:

> I have had experiences where I felt the cacti in the desert were alive that they could see me, hear me, read my mind. I have felt that trees were conscious while hiking in the mountains.

The next example, from Belinda, does not fit Hood's definition perfectly. Rather than connect with the inner subjectivity of the crane, the martial artist in question described that she felt she actually became a crane. In doing so, I judge that her experience does relate to that of Inner Subjective Quality:

> The spiritual occurrence happened when we began to deviate from the pau kua forms. We learned to stand and see like a crane. Midway through the form, and after it was over, I had a heightened sense of awareness, similar to the times way back in college when I had tried LSD and mescaline. Objects were brighter, clearer, more clearly in focus than I had ever seen. I sensed a great stillness, and yet could hear everything. In essence, I had become the crane. We learned other animal forms after that, and each form presented a different kind of hyperawareness.

This category proved to be the most difficult to analyse, in part because there was not a wide range of evidence from the women's accounts. It was also different from other categories since it proved more complicated to explain in a few words.

Temporal/ Spatial Quality

Temporal/ Spatial Quality refers to the temporal and spatial parameters of the experience. Essentially, both time and space are modified, with the extreme being an experience that is both "timeless" and "spaceless."

> Isla: I had been doing laps for about forty minutes, when I realized I had no sense of time and space. I wasn't conscious of where I was (though I felt that I was in water), and the movements/ motions were so automatic that they were not in the least bit occupying me. I'm not sure how long this lasted, probably for less than five minutes, but when I regained awareness of my surroundings, I could still sense the "non-sensations."

This category proved very interesting in the ways that the women's accounts alluded to this experience. The quality of "timelessness" was played out for a dancer in a different way than for a kayaker, for example. Rather than losing track of time, as was often recounted, Annette, a dancer, lost the need to concentrate either on the beat, or on how her body moved to it. Not only did the women find that their spiritual experiences had a timeless and spaceless quality, they often spoke of another quality, that of being in another place, of being somehow transported. This was graphically explained by Chantelle. She wrote, "It even suddenly seems that I have been transported to another place and my surrounding seemed unfamiliar; like I was in a Star Trek transporter!" Other women also lost track of time:

> Christine: I completely lose track of time (literally) and can go for miles without even realizing I'm paddling.
>
> Gerry: During a croquet tournament I lost track of time and didn't experience the impatience with my opponent that has occurred in the past.
>
> Tanya: The pull of the undertow, the sound of the water's rhythm as it pounds against the sand. I lose all track of time.

Other women testified to the spatial aspect of this mystical quality of experience and described how they felt transported:

> Pauline: When I attend class I find myself transported.
>
> Rebeccah: Dance takes me to another place – a wondrous place.

Noetic Quality

Noetic Quality refers to the experience as a source of valid knowledge. Emphasis is on a non-rational, intuitive, insightful experience that is, nevertheless, recognized as not being merely subjective.

I thought that, given this definition, this category might prove more difficult than it was for women to describe. Several women wrote stories; I have selected two in order to demonstrate their coming about and discovering of the knowledge. In the first story, Donna, a new kayaker, describes how she found the knowledge to cope with the recent death of her fiancee [sic]:

> Kayaking fits into my endeavour to get more in touch with "real" reality opposed to the illusory reality we all are taught is real. On a recent outing on the lake, I found myself on a kind of boundary between the "natural" world on the undeveloped shores of the lake, and the "human-created" world on the developed side – boat ramp, piers, picnic tables, children playing, old people fishing. As I contemplated the contrast between the two worlds, it hit me that the idea of death was our construct and not a part of the real world. In the real world, there are changes and cycles – comings and goings – but "death" is part of the world of our creation, a human construct, another part of the illusion. We created death and "brought it into" the world, at least our version of the world, in a way oddly congruent with the story in Genesis.
>
> I have an intense sense of the universe and am aware of how simple and clear this knowledge feels. I used to call this "the energy of the universe." In the last two years, I realized that this might be what God is all about after all; finally, the story in the bible and reality come together and speak to each other. It seems in those moments that my physical and spiritual parts have come to a balance and work together. In those moments, I cannot imagine *not*

performing physical activities because I am not sure it is possible to reach the same place without physical involvement, especially on a high-energy output level. And when I am in this place, everything in the world feels right and feels like it is in its place.

In speaking about the knowledge acquired during exercise, Jacqueline shared the following:

> I think I am about to find it. For me it is really about being human, totally. In offices, in shops, in restaurants we are always encouraged not to think anything but trivial thoughts. We are to forget about the meaning of our existence. We are all going to die, but we never speak about it. We forget the now to put up with future. The real thing is really simple. But the simple thing is very complicated. Physical exercise makes me feel very simple and very real. Eternal.

The following brief quotes illuminate how women described Noetic Quality in their own words:

Annette: Thought and feeling were the same thing.

Donna: An insight into reality.

Judy: I feel a sense of spiritual clarity after I work out.

Georgia: And then I ask to hear God's voice (which I know to be my own inner voice) to know what to do, where to go, etc.

Patricia: This is when I feel detached from the life I live every day and attached to a separate reality.

Rachel: A special serenity envelops me and I know everything is right in the world

Many women claimed to have spiritual insights during a range of sports; for instance, Colleen, a dancer wrote, "My spiritual insights have mostly occurred when meditating, hiking, dancing, doing archery and swimming." The following quote is an example, given by Belinda, of a deep spiritual insight gained immediately after a training session:

> I had several synchronous experiences during this time period. I had a flash of insight that my "name" was "seer of patterns." Since I'm a statistician and poet, this name made perfect sense. I cried with some relief at understanding that this was who I am, and at the same time, I understood that this name helped me to resolve some seeming paradoxes of my life.

Ineffability

Ineffability refers to the impossibility of expressing the experience in conventional language. The experience simply cannot be put into words due to the nature of the experience itself, not to the linguistic capability of the subject.

> Donna: Words don't lend themselves to describing these experiences - maybe that's part of why they're described as "transcendental" huh? I don't seem to be conveying the sense of it successfully here.

Perhaps not ironically, the women's words about ineffability were brief and succinct; after all, how much can be said about the difficulty of expressing oneself!

> Belinda: Most of what I feel is not describable in words.

> Pauline: It is difficult to put the feelings into words.

> Rachel: I only wish I could translate it better to others.

Rebeccah expressed the frustration that she experienced when trying to explain what happened: "I wish I could do a better job at describing what it all means to me. Language is so inadequate." Others did not really feel the same need to put it into words, finding it something which is not meant to be verbalized:

> Josee: Exactly what happened to me in terms of a spiritual experience is hard to describe because it seems so surreal.

> Colleen: To speak about how I felt emotionally, physically and spiritually would be at best an intellectualization of the experience!

Positive Affect

Positive Affect refers to the positive affective quality of the experience. Typically the experience is of joy or blissful happiness.

This category was the most often cited as a component of the spirituality of the experience. However, I found it interesting that the statistics for this category did not support the strength of this trend. Perhaps this is because the Positive Affect that is regularly accompanied by women having spiritual experiences while involved in physical activity is not the most notable or dramatic function. Even though the experience of contentment, joy, and ecstasy may not have seemed as much out of the ordinary as the feeling of Egoloss, the comments were equally descriptive and remarkable. In most cases, the participants did not go on to describe the Positive Affect of the experience for more than a few sentences. Instead, the comments were summed up in a few words or a sentence. The words that were used in account after account included wonderful, peace, joy, love, perfection, great, and happiness. The following are a brief collection from among more than fifty such excerpts:

> Esther: Total peace and tranquillity came over me.
>
> Geeta: I experienced that feeling of pride, joy and calm only when I was excelling in a sport or on a dance floor.
>
> Belinda: I felt a deep sense of peace and joy. I felt slightly giddy – like after I came out of a sensory deprivation tank.
>
> Judy: I felt a feeling of loving acceptance and joy when I first began training.
>
> Pauline: It is a wonderful experience.
>
> Jacqueline: It is a great moment of perfect relief, and it lasts for hours after training.
>
> Tanya: When I mountain bike I feel such a surge of joy.
>
> Rachel: I felt so totally and fully uplifted by the power of the movement.
>
> Ellen: I feel that I will burst with joy.

Mair: I feel a kind of euphoria coming from the feeling that the effort produces.

Colleen: It is like moving with the rhythm of life, a joy that wells up from inside me and makes my whole body smile. Dancing – moved by the sound, rhythm. Fluid expression of limbs and being. Sense of awe. Tears of joy, ecstasy. Smile. Smile. Smile.

Chantelle: I have had feelings of euphoria, where I felt the world was perfect, a feeling of incredible peace and tranquillity.

Belinda wrote a brief story about an experience that left her with a great feeling of Positive Affect:

> On the last night I attended pau kua before leaving the area, the teacher turned the class over to me. I lead the class in free-form animal forms, teaching them what I had "learned" how to "morph" from one animal to another, feeling the essence of the animal, feeling the transition. It was a powerful experience for all of us, and I sobbed with sadness, happiness, and relief on my way home from that class.

Religious Quality

Religious Quality refers to the intrinsic sacredness of the experience. This includes feelings of mystery, awe and reverence that may, nevertheless, be expressed independently of traditional religious language. The following words were frequently used to describe the religious quality of the experience: sense of awe, reunion with the sacred, part of divinity, sacredness of life. Many of the women who cited this quality as central in their experience of spirituality did not list a religious orientation. For example, Judy wrote, "I have a strong sense of gratitude for the ability I have been given and am very aware of my connection with a supernatural energy." The following story exhibits the effect of the religious quality on Gerry's new competitive experience:

> I began to experience the non-attachment that the mystics have spoken of. I was aware of a deeper relaxation than I have ever had while playing croquet. I can only attribute this to being firmly grounded in the spiritual side of the game that I choose to find there, rather than the cutthroat competition that usually prevails.

Finally, Chantelle, a sea kayaker with no religious affiliation, made three references to the religious quality of her experience, feeling presence, representations, and the actuality of the divine in her account:

> These experiences have been in relation to the ocean, which in itself seems to be the divine. I feel high when paddling though challenging water like high swells, because I'm paddling through a representation of the supreme being. I feel an intensely strong bond, a feeling of the presence of a Higher Power, Being, Spirit or whatever.

Section Four: Other Themes

Although Stace's categories cover a wide range of themes mentioned throughout the women's narratives, several other similarities and themes emerged from the accounts. There is a need, with the special relation of spirituality to sport, to take these into consideration. Among these was the feeling of connection, both inside oneself and to others, and to the environment. I have also explored the accounts in which the religious women made direct reference to their religious practice in light of their spiritual experiences in sport. In many accounts, the impact of nature upon women's experiences could not be ignored, and so I have also investigated this as another theme. I compare and contrast the experience of spirituality as related by the participants in terms of whether the setting involved a partner, a group, or occurred alone, and whether the activity was competitive or non-competitive. This is followed by noting the physical state of the participants after their experience, and their inherent loss of fear. I conclude this section by taking a closer look at some of the women's comments in relation to physical activity exclusively with other women, and by highlighting and including several stories which need to be preserved in their entirety to demonstrate the magnitude and power of the experience of spirituality in physical activity, sport, martial arts and dance.

Connection

The word "connection" came up again and again in the women's narratives; however, Stace has no category which directly embraces the women's meanings of this word. In some

cases, the accounts might have been located in another category, but it seemed truest to the accounts to investigate the sense of "connection" as a separate theme. Connection was mentioned in several ways: the connection to oneself; the connection to the world or physical surroundings; and the connection to a higher being. Occasionally, it was not mentioned what the connection was with, but a detailed description was provided. Barbara's account provides a good example of connection with oneself: "Dance helps me connect with a part of myself that is deeper than that which is reachable through normal daily activity. It's an escape from the stresses of the world into the solitude of myself." Belinda also felt this connection, and went on to say "I feel a need to connect more. I learned to see connections among the seemingly unconnected." Kim provided a striking metaphor when describing the connection that she felt extended to envelop the planet:

> On several occasions, I have experienced what I would describe as a closing of the connection – like an electrical circuit – where the energy I am dedicating has connected with all the other energy on the planet going for that purpose, and it is a chilling and exhilarating feeling.

Joanne, a beach volleyball player, described what happened spiritually as connecting to a partner on the court. Finally, Jennifer felt a connection that surpassed herself and the natural world; she wrote, "I am overcome at this time that I am connected to something much greater than I can ever imagine." Regardless of the fact that connection was not included as part of Stace's eight categories, it was definitely an important part of the experience for many of the women involved in this study. Although the connection that the women spoke of embraced different directions – with oneself, with the world, and to a higher being – the connection and sense of spirituality that was derived from it was meaningful to each one.

Religious women

Although a large number of participants did not mark that they had any religious affiliation, there were some who considered themselves strongly affiliated, and who were very involved with their religious organizations on a daily or weekly basis. Often, these women made a direct connection between their accounts of spirituality in physical activity, and their

religion. For some, their experiences were part of their religion, and equal their experiences in traditional settings providing yet another venue for spiritual connection. Others, such as Mair, a Jewish Rabbinical student, wrote that, as an athlete and dancer, she had spiritual experiences "equalling or exceeding those which I have experienced in traditional Jewish venues."

Belinda shared how she had led her women's spirituality group in their first Beltane celebration by sharing the animal forms in Tai Chi. In another account, Josee described a dance performance in which her physical movements mimicked that of prayerful worship. She wrote of God, "He was on stage with me." Esther described herself as a devout Christian and said that she "competes for the Lord, for I know that this is His will and I can honour Him here [in the pool] as well." She also included that she uses visualization to connect spiritually in preparation for her national competitions.

Another participant, Georgia, who described her involvement religiously as endorsing the twelve-step program, wrote about how she believes and practices "Moving Meditation." When she runs, she recites the first three of the twelve steps as a way to calm herself. This process helped her recover from clinical depression, and she has continued to use it for the past nine years.

The relation of the setting to the experience

This was, perhaps, the largest, and most frequently mentioned category. As Hillary described, "Spiritual experiences usually also have the component of setting." Joanne succinctly described this in her Part One narrative: "The forest is my cathedral, the ocean my church." Jennifer wrote a beautiful panentheistic (seeing a deity through nature as opposed to seeing the deity as nature) illustration about what she observes while engaging in her secondary sport of running: "When the sun streaks through the clouds, it sometimes strikes me as God's fingers pointing down to us all."

It is important to consider the setting when we are considering the experience, since the accounts that I am examining all deal with the integration of the body and the spirit. One cannot, therefore, isolate the body and spirit as one being existing outside its environment.

Integration of the body and spirit involves the physical dimension in which a person is located. The setting is also important as part of the experience in that it influences one's affective nature and wellbeing. As Geeta wrote, "I like to bike in nature where I know I will appreciate the calm, peaceful environment. Those moments are essential for my mental health."

As well as mentioning the readily observable physical surroundings, some women made mention of other senses, in particular, things that they could hear and smell. For example, while biking through the woods, Tanya found that "the pine and cedar scent in the air, animals, the light falling through the branches ... all combine to lift me." Jennifer found her Sunday morning running sessions to be the most rewarding. She enjoyed listening to bluegrass music, and noted "especially liking the time of morning when the sun begins to filter through the trees." Rebeccah also mentioned the effect that music had on her experience: "Music is very immediate for me. I like to succumb to the rhythm, allow the sound to infuse my blood, the melody to fuse with muscle and sinew."

Although the component of setting came through quite strongly in a number of accounts, there were several other accounts in which the setting had absolutely nothing to do with the experience. For example, Saleema described how she felt when running indoors on a treadmill:

> ... the colours around me (in the gym) seem suddenly intensely bright. The first time it happened, I thought I had just experienced the "runner's high" that I had heard so much about. The next time it happened, I attributed it to the music I was listening to. The third time it happened I felt such a sense of peace, and warmth, unrelated to sweating!

Experience as Part of a Pair, Group or Solo

The next section examines the nature of the experience as it was affected by the participants' involvement in a solo activity, with a partner, or with a group. As was indicated earlier, 36% of the women participated in their activity alone, 55% participated both individually and with a group, and 9% participated only in a group.

Solo Experience

Judy wrote about her spiritual preference to be by herself: "I am able to have communion more readily if I am involved in an individual sport where I am not distracted by others. My spirituality is very private and personal." This situation was often mentioned by other solo athletes; although they did not explicitly state the need to be alone, it was the solitude and silence that allowed them to enter into a spiritual experience.

Partner Experience

A few women shared information about the effect of a partner in their spiritual experience. Elena found the physical and mental connection that occurs between partners in ballroom dancing to be a contribution to a spiritual connection. Likewise, Josee experienced spirituality as a result of working with her duet partner and the rigour involved in producing a dance performance that was synchronized.

Group and Team Experience

Although there were relatively few women involved who participated in team sports as their main activity, these team players all mentioned the importance of the other players. Georgia explains how the spiritual connection in basketball is "simply TEAM". She wrote,

> I find myself in love with my team-mates after a particularly wonderful interaction of pass-pass-pass-pass-shoot. You feel compelled to slap hands at those moments. I watch all the hugging in the WNBA, which I know is part of the same feeling. I take that expression of love in teamwork and mutual exertion to be spiritual.

There were also several women who derived great satisfaction from doing their sport alongside other participants; for instance, Geeta said, "Mountain biking is a spiritual experience in the way of participating in a group for a common goal." Mair expressed a similar sentiment when she mentioned, "looking around and feeling the common energy among fellow gymnasts, both at rest and in movement, gives me a deep sense of balance and energy in my world." Finally, Rachel shared her experience conducting a children's dance

performance which transcended the effect of a solo or team activity: "Even though I was in a room with three thousand other people, I felt that there was no one else around. I was alone and in ecstasy. I've been told by those watching that it is magical."

Competitive versus non-competitive settings

In this section, I examine accounts from women involved in both competitive and non-competitive sport situations who experienced spirituality. Some women suggested that spiritual experiences could only occur if the pressure from competition were absent. Others, however, reported this experience only under competitive settings. Here, I give examples of athletes in competitive and non-competitive settings who each described the nature of their spiritual experiences in relation to the competition or lack thereof in their sport.

Abigail, a national handball champion, wrote comparing competitive and non-competitive settings and discussed why serious competition, for her, is not conducive to a spiritual experience:

> I have had experiences in handball where I played at an unconscious level, doing everything right without thinking of anything in particular. However, most of the time, I am concentrating too hard on the ball, strategy, etc. to get the feeling of unconsciousness.

In similar fashion, Jennifer humorously described how the only times she has experienced spirituality while competing in orienteering (as opposed to her regular running training) were "when I totally gave up because I was overtime or totally lost." For these two women, the pressure of competition, although it was readily available to them in their sporting pursuits, was not conducive to a spiritual experience.

In contrast to these two stories, other women explain how the competitive pressure was part of what led to a spiritual experience. Joanne described the "ecstatic" level of volleyball that occurred in competition, and said, "I've had this happen the most often in the playoffs or in higher competitive games." Gerry had a spiritual moment while playing croquet at national-level tournament against her lifetime nemesis. She wrote that,

> Croquet is highly competitive, but it is spiritual for me as well because it teaches me to "be in the moment" and take each shot individually without an investment in how it will turn out ... Therefore, it teaches me more about non-attachment, which for me is part of the essence of my spiritual belief.

She went on to write about how the experience shaped her practice time after the competition: "Rather than feeling frustrated or nerve-wracked now when I get on the courts to practice, I remember the calm I experienced during that game."

It is obvious from these examples that spirituality can occur in both competitive and non-competitive settings. However, it would seem that, based on these examples, this is likely to be determined by personal and situational factors. It is not clear whether or not a woman who experiences spirituality while under competitive pressure will also experience it as part of her training regimen or vice versa.

Physical Refreshment

Another interesting experience of spirituality that has come out of this research involves the feeling of refreshment where fatigue would be expected. In several cases, women mentioned losing exercise-related feelings such as discomfort, soreness and heavy breathing. Instead, they described feelings of restedness, fulfilment, and relaxation, even while expending great quantities of energy. Sandra wrote of her running, "I can attain a sense of connection with my mind and body, so that I'm unaware of physical discomfort (burning muscles, heaving respirations) and only have a sense of freedom, speed, wellbeing and connection with me, my spirit." Rebeccah, a dancer, wrote that, "Dancing energizes me. It helps me to feel restored." Therefore, rather than reporting fatigue after regular exercise, some women who had an experience of spirituality noted their special feeling of physical refreshment.

No Fear

Another interesting theme that emerged from this set of narratives was that of the "Loss of Fear." Several of the women noted how their fear was taken away, or how feelings of safety and protection occurred during their experiences of spirituality. The items that had previously caused these fears were varied: for some, it was the physical environment or risk

involved with the sport; for others, the fear stemmed from their personal internalized feelings about their performances. For example, both Chantelle, a paddler, and Evelyn, a cross-country skier, wrote about how they overcame the fear presented to them by their natural environment, the challenging waters, and moose on the ski trails. Both of these women lost the fear that they normally experience in their sport settings.

The fear that was dissipated for women involved in the potentially less-dangerous practice of dance and martial arts was slightly different, but was expressed with the same certainty of resolve. Jacqueline described how, when she was on stage and feeling the spirituality that accompanied her dancing, "Nobody can hurt me." Megan, a martial artist, described it this way: "All of my worries, thoughts, fears, and hopes fall away into the fire." Another martial artist, Judy, explained a loss of fear allowed her to focus more extensively on her techniques.

Women Specific

A few of the women commented on how their experiences were strengthened through the presence of other women; for example, Holly commented, "When I practice with other women I have a much stronger sense of a shared purpose uniting us all, and of being in sacred space and time." Isla included her belief that the body is a gateway towards spiritual awareness. She believed that by using the physical side in a practice such as yoga, one can experience immediate results. She went on to state that, "I also believe this is especially true for women, since we experience our bodies more wholly."

Kim responded to my post on the women's martial arts list *kiai*, of which she is was an active member. She shared the following story about an experience she had at the National Women's Martial Arts Federation training camp while taking a workshop on forms. She decided to devote her form to "the day when all women will speak with their own words, in their own voices". The following is her account:

> After the third move, I clicked into focus, envisioning the lawn and trees before me as a forest of women unable to speak. My attacks were then directed to the oppressors of their voices, each blow liberating another voice.

> As I turned into the third portion of the form there is a kihap: a shout to combine all one's energy with the "ki" or universal energy source. After the kihap, a breeze picked up, and all the grasses and leaves on the trees and bushes began to move in the breeze and add their sounds to the sound of my breathing. As my attacks continued, I sensed a great clearing of my breathing, as if the wind was blowing through me too, and this wind was the sigh of release of the bound voices. The kihap that ended the form sprang from deeper within me than I ever heard or felt before, and the resonance in my chest was just astounding. It seemed to me I could hear millions of voices within that cry.

Alone in the Experience

I received a few e-mails from women who asked, "Is my experience valid?" Besides these inquiries, several women wrote that they were very surprised to hear of others experiencing these feelings and that, even more so, these experiences were being examined in my preliminary research. As a result, several of the women wrote that they had never talked about this feeling to anyone else, and thought that, perhaps, they were the only one who had felt it. Helen, a woman from the United Kingdom, was very interested in knowing immediately about responses from other women so she would be able to talk with others about her experience to better understand it. She had not yet been able to talk to anyone else feeling that "they wouldn't understand." Jennifer wrote at the conclusion of her narrative account that she had never told anyone about these feelings "except my husband, who sent me your URL" (Universal Resource Locator). Angela wrote of how she uses the integration of dance and spirituality to do ritual healing and meditation: "I am the only person I know whose experiences of spirituality took the form of dance."

Stories

In the previous ten sections I have examined various themes which the women involved identified. The stories showed, again and again, how important the spiritual experience was in the lives of these women. There were, among the narratives, several that could not be relayed in terms of themes or individual meanings. Judy shared the following story:

> I had suffered in an unhappy marriage for ten years at the hands of an emotionally and physically abusive husband. My son (nine years at the time) was taking karate and I decided to join him. Well, to say that my life changed would be an understatement. I gained a sense of wellbeing that is indescribable. I have always been an athlete, having competed in team sports as well as individual sports such as field hockey, basketball, tennis, swimming, cross-country skiing, ski racing, triathlons, mountain biking and golf. Of course I have felt the endorphin-based rush from long-distance running and felt the presence of God as I stood on top of a mountain and watched the sun come up, but it isn't the same!

The stories also gave evidence, as in the previous example, that the spiritual experience is not the same as a "runner's high," and is not merely a result of spectacular scenery. These stories begged to be examined by the reader in their entirety; they are gripping, and serve as poignant examples of the life-changing nature of these experiences. Because of the length of each story, the three that I have selected are included in Appendix E. They include the story of Rebeccah who, though she can barely walk, experienced a re-awakening of spirit through dance, Laura, who shared her struggle and success as she ascended out of the Grand Canyon and finally, Joanne, a regular team-sport player who described the spiritual regeneration she experienced on her first mountaineering experience.

Section Five: Quantitative Analysis Using Hood's Scale

It is difficult to conduct empirical research on the subject of human experience, especially as it relates to spirituality or mysticism. Hood's scale was chosen as a "potentially useful instrument for persons interested in the investigation of mystical experiences," and was deliberately developed from a conceptualization of mysticism that attempts to be cross-cultural, ahistorical, and unbiased by religious ideology (Hood, 1975, pp. 29-41).

In this section, I examine the M (mysticism scale) values, including the range, mean, mode and standard deviation. Where possible, I compare the values from this study to those

in Hood's findings.[4] Following this, I explore the individual and item-total coefficients, again comparing the current results to those in Hood's study.

Final Mysticism Scale

Calculating the M value

The M scale combines the thirty-two items to report the total singular experience of mysticism. Results for this table were calculated in accordance with Hood's calculation, and are listed according to each of Stace's eight operational categories. In this section I comment on the mean, mode and range of M scores, and compare them with those that Hood recorded. I also empirically confirm that a deep spiritual experience did take place for each woman.

Women selected either definitely true (-2), probably true (-1), unsure (?), probably not (+1), and definitely not (+2). Of note, the web page was programmed for women to select from among these five phrases on a toolbar that popped up when the curser was placed on each question. As a result, there was less chance in human reporting error, or in trying to figure which numerical value best suited their experience. In cases where the web page was not accessible for the participants, I e-mailed a copy, and participants either typed in the terms such as "definitely true," etc, or devised their own system, such that "definitely true" was "a", probably true was "b", and so on. The web page results were e-mailed to my account with the statement and corresponding mathematical value.

Sample from E-mail sent from Web Page
name: Monica
Email:participant@ualberta.ca
Narrative Block: (not included here)

1. *+2* I have had an experience which was both timeless and spaceless.
2. *-2* I have never had an experience which was incapable of being expressed in words.

(The participant selected "definitely true" and "definitely not true" in response to the statements.)

---

[4] I was unable to conduct a factor analysis on the data set since I was a distance student and Computing Services would not authorize off-campus use of the statistical programs that are regularly available to students at the University, even though I was paying computing fees.

These numbers were then transferred into Microsoft Excel creating a twenty-six-participant by thirty-two-factor grid. Calculating the "M" (or Mysticism score) was done using the following procedure: the scale was scored by first reversing the algebraic sign, if it was negative, and adding +3. Scores of ? were given the value 0.

-2 = (2+3) x 32 items =160 2 = (2+3) x 32 items = 160

Range of the M Scale

The range of the scale is from 96 (least mystical), to 160 (most mystical), calculated in the following manner: scores of -2 or +2 would both score 5 points, multiplied by thirty-two questions to a total value of 160 points, the highest mark on the range. The lowest possible M score would result from 0 + 3 = 3 x 32 = 96. Therefore the range of M scores should be 96, at the low end, to 160, as the highest possible.[5] The M scores for the twenty-six women was from 130 to 160. Unfortunately Hood listed no range or mode with which to compare these findings.

(-2 = 2) +3 = 5 5 x 32 = 160

Mean & Ranges of Hood's Scale:

Notably the mean on Hood's scale sample of Protestant men was 109.3 (SD = 22.6) whereas for women it was 119.4 (SD=18.8). I, therefore, sought only to compare the mean from this study from the divided sample of women. Still, the mean recorded through the web page was much higher, with many participants finding every category to be "probably true"(+2) or "definitely not true" (-2). In fact, the mode of my sample was 160.

[5] This was incorrectly written by Hood

Table Three. **Statistical Comparison with Hood's study**

Statistical Functions	**Hood's Study**	***This Study***
Range	32-160[5]	*96-160*
Mean	119.4	*154*
Mode	N/A	*160*
Standard Deviation	18.8	*10.6*

Correlation Coefficients

I calculated the correlation coefficients for each of the thirty-two questions and for each of Hood's eight categories (four questions in each) as per Hood's instructions (1975, p.31). The correlation for each of the eight categories is based upon sub-scale to total scale correlations calculated with that sub-scale excluded from the total score. The contribution of each scale item to the total scale is listed in the second chart, and was calculated based upon item to total scale correlation with that item excluded from the total score.

Table Four Individual Correlation Coefficients

32-factor	Hood's Results	This study
1	0.48	0.53
2	0.29	0.52
3	0.52	0.48
4	0.36	0.58
5	0.36	-0.1
6	0.42	0.59
7	0.40	0.43
8	0.46	0.48
9	0.44	0.75
10	0.43	0.54
11	0.41	0.64
12	0.52	0.47
13	0.43	0.35
14	0.30	0.37
15	0.46	0.78
16	0.35	0.58
17	0.44	0.48
18	0.45	0.53
19	0.52	0.47
20	0.33	0.28
21	0.37	0.43
22	0.33	0.07
23	0.42	0.61
24	0.36	0.75
25	0.40	0.29
26	0.45	0.70
27	0.54	0.82
28	0.55	0.78
29	0.39	0.66
30	0.46	0.82
31	0.37	0.77
32	0.42	0.62
average	0.42	0.53

Correlation comparison

Hood concluded that although the correlation of the individual items varied widely, none of the coefficients were unacceptably low. In the current study there was a wider variance in the coefficients; however, the average of the individual coefficients was significantly higher than in Hood's study. Only items 5, 22 and 29 had lower coefficients than any of those in Hood's study, and the majority of coefficients were stronger. Therefore, as in Hood's study, each of the eight categories, and each of the thirty-two questions had a positive relation to the overall reporting of a mystical experience.

Item total coefficients

Four questions, two negative and two positive, were phrased for each of Stace's eight categories to check that the form of expression did not alter the meaningfulness of the measurement of these categories.

Table Five Correlation of the eight factors

Eight Factors	Questions	Hood's Study	This Study
Ego Quality	3,4,6,24	0.64	0.59
Unifying Quality	12,19,28,30	0.6	0.65
Inner Subjective Quality	8,10,29,31	0.56	0.58
Temporal/ Spatial Quality	1,11,15,27	0.54	0.71
Noetic Quality	13,16,17,26	0.5	0.78
Ineffability	2,21,23,32	0.45	0.31
Positive Affect	5,7,18,25	0.62	0.54
Religious Quality	9,14,20,22	0.39	0.36
Total of correlation		4.3	4.52
Average of correlation		**0.54**	**0.57**

Conclusions

The correlation results were somewhat surprising in light of the qualitative results. Of the eight categories tested by Hood, the Temporal/ Spatial Quality (.71) and Noetic Quality (.78) scored highest; that is to say, the scores in this category are most highly related to the total M score. Religious Quality and Ineffability both had the lowest correlations ranking at (.36) and (.31) respectively. Based upon the number of entries and depth of the women's citing of each of these categories, the figures seem to point in another direction. Was the descriptor of Ineffability truly the least important or most uncharacteristic function of the women's experiences? Was the Noetic and Temporal/ Spatial qualities most characteristic of the women's experiences? The women were instructed to complete their narratives, which appeared first, before scrolling and filling out Hood's Scale of Mysticism. Is it a possibility that, although many did not mention a Noetic Quality in their narratives, that when presented with a direct question as to its presence or absence as part of their experience, they clearly identified it as significant? Or perhaps, as in the case of Ineffability, after having completed a narrative (usually a minimum one paragraph in length) that may have included a comment about the difficulty of expression, they realized they were actually able to write about, and therefore express their experience in words. Whatever the case, the quantitative statistics show, as do the qualitative ones, that women experience spirituality in physical activity, sport, martial arts and dance, and that these experiences are strong and meaningful. Although the type of methodology clearly affected the varying levels of component parts of spirituality and mysticism, both demonstrated that experiences in this area are definitely occurring and are a valid source of knowledge.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

Throughout the past year I have gained inspiring insights into the spiritual experiences of women participating in many forms of physical activity, sport, martial arts and dance. Although this topic had not been previously examined in the literature, the testimonials I received confirmed not only that these experiences are occurring, but that they play a meaningful role in the lives of many women. The study also supported my personal feelings that spirituality can be experienced within the arena of sports, and that this may be a totally normal occurrence.

Through this thesis I have aimed to provide a glimpse into the experiences that the women involved have shared. My purpose in completing this study was to provide a preliminary investigation of women's experiences; it is now important to highlight the need for further research and study of this topic.

If religious/ spiritual leaders were made aware of the spiritual solitude and comfort many people find in physical activity, sport, martial arts, and dance, perhaps they would do more to encourage their followers, especially girls and women, to be more deeply involved in these practices. Similarly, teachers of various physical activities would do well to be educated that the benefits for participants can easily extend beyond the physical realm, and that this should be encouraged rather than played down, ignored, or even denied, as is most often the case.

As more and more women participate in the leadership of spiritual/ religious organizations in which female leadership is allowed and encouraged, so, too, more women are progressing into the upper echelons of sports as coaches, trainers, managers and professional status athletes, and women's participation in sports is on the increase. This participation allows for the empowerment of women, as does the knowledge that one is not alone in an experience. Completing this research has already borne testimony to the feelings of isolation in many women, who imagined that they were the "odd ones out" in experiencing spirituality in this non-traditional, embodied, active context. As women involved in both sport

and spiritual pursuits grow more confident in examining, sharing and communicating what they feel and do in all areas of their lives, and not just in relation to physical activity or spirituality, they themselves, I believe, will be more empowered, and another step will have been taken in the process of achieving full equality for women.

Esther Dyson says in her book, *Release 2.0*, that "we and our children will be spending increasing proportions of our social and intellectual and commercial lives in the digital world" (1997, n.p.). I chose to do my research work in the digital world, to communicate with participants through e-mail and interactive web pages. Although there seems to be unlimited information on how to use the web for any a multitude of functions, information regarding the use of the web for research communication is scarce.

In Chapter Two I examined the uses of the combined qualitative and quantitative methodologies employed for this research. I also explained how I was able to collect both quantitative and qualitative data using the web pages constructed for the research, e-mail, a questionnaire, a narrative blank form, and an online version of Hood's Scale of Mysticism (Hood, 1975, pp. 29-41).

The response from the women involved in this research was overwhelmingly positive. Not only was I able to quickly gain access to more than eighty volunteers to study an experience which had not been previously been examined, but the women were co-operative, supporting, and very encouraging both towards the work I was doing, and to the new technology and methods I was employing using the web.

Using Internet technologies both to find and keep open communication with participants proved to be a highly successful venture. The cost, apart from the initial web page setup, was minimal. Even after upgrading my computer and changing my location twice during the project, it was relatively easy to transport my work via e-mail files, since the project was essentially paperless. When it came time to organize and analyse the narratives I was able to directly transport the information from my e-mail to my word processor.

Although there are potential obstacles in conducting research in cyberspace, most can be overcome with careful thinking and planning (e-mail consent form, spamming, participation from only women). Overall, the ease of use of the Internet for research far outweighed any

difficulties or barriers I encountered. From my own participation on several lists during the past four years, I have observed that the Internet is gaining acceptance as a place that research can be conducted. It is now fairly common for students, academics and professionals to post questionnaires directly onto e-mail listservs.[4]

Given the increasing availability of personal web page construction programs, I believe this tool will become more and more accessible to researchers for designing and implementing their data collection.[5] I agree with the sentiments of Sharon Whiting that, "Technology is a tool well-suited to women – once educated in the multitude of ways we can use it to our advantage in our individual environments and situations, we tend to do so promptly" (1997, Computer Software). It is my expectation that, in the future, the web will be used efficiently and wisely by and for women, for various types of research.

Although using the web for research was ideal given my physical location, there were aspects of the research in which this proved to be a greater hindrance than I had expected. When I first contacted SIRC (Sport Information Resource Centre) with regard to reference material for my project, I was told that the best thing to do would be to go to my university.[6] I had made it clear when I e-mailed them that this was not a possibility, and that I wanted to try and do my research within the limitations provided by the new technology of the web. There were also several problems with the University of Alberta libraries; often books were recalled before they had arrived in the mail. This meant that I had to pay for return postage without ever having had access to the books, and had to go to considerable lengths in order to reverse the late charges on books that were not available to me. Notably, many public libraries (such as the High Level public library) will mail out up to twelve books at a time and cover postage costs both ways, as well as awarding longer borrowing periods for subscribers who have less than daily mail service. The program that the University has for distance education students, for which I registered in order to get books, charges a five dollar fee for each item. As a result, although many aspects of my current research were facilitated by the

---

[4]For example: Pennington, T. (1998). USPE-l survey. (E-mail communication Feb. 23rd)

[5] Most word processing programs such as WordPerfect 8, on which this thesis was typed, includes a function to save a file in HTML coding.

[6]E-mail ref@sirc.ca

new technologies, other parts of the research procedure, such as gaining access to University library materials at the start, would be very difficult if a researcher was off-campus.

In Chapter Three I discussed the characteristics of the sample of online women in the research. Although this group is part of an elite group of women because they have computer and e-mail/ Internet access, there remained a great deal of diversity within the sample. The majority of women involved in this project were either students and staff at educational institutions, or worked in computer-related fields.

Twelve countries were represented in total from among the volunteers; the United States predominating with 70% of volunteers listing it as their country of residence. Women involved in the study participated in over fifty different sports which could be classified into eight different categories (the number of forms of the category are indicated in brackets): dance (6), martial arts (8), water sports (11), winter sports (2) , outdoor sports (3), extreme sports (2), team or dual sports (10), and individual sports (8). The experience of spirituality was attested to regardless of the sporting endeavour.

The range of religious involvement was almost as diverse as the sporting backgrounds, the difference being that there was a higher proportion of women who affiliated themselves with mainstream organizations such as Protestantism or Catholicism. Although there was representation from other groups such as Wiccan, Baha'i, Christian Science and Muslim faiths, in most cases it was just one participant from each of the groups.

The study aimed to identify and include the accounts of women with disabilities, and four women who classified themselves as such participated. As well, there were several women who had attained a national or professional ranking in their respective disciplines who were able to share the specific contribution of a competitive element to their experiences. Finally, the study also noted the involvement of bisexual and lesbian participants at a rate of five percent and ten percent (of total respondents, not just those who responded to this question) respectively. Given that the sample size, from which to judge variations in the groups, was comparatively small, it would have been difficult to observe any fundamental differences in the experiences of these women. Furthermore, the material demonstrated, time and again, the similarities in the accounts despite the diverse cross-section of women.

Although most of the women were fairly comfortable using e-mail, not all had web access or experience. Women without web access requested e-mail copies of the web page and responded by submitting their responses with the "reply" key function. However, for those who had the technology but had not tried such things as sending e-mail from a web page, most were happy to attempt this feat in order to participate.

As Industry Canada pours up to twenty-million dollars per year towards establishing community access programs, and the newly-elected British Labour government promises to have computers in every classroom by the end of the next school year, computer access will become more widespread and less elitist. Despite the advancements in the availability of technology, there are still countless obstacles that many will have to overcome before getting online. Economic and linguistic barriers were identified at the First Annual Canadian Women's Internet Conference in Ottawa in the fall of 1997 (Panitach, 1998, pp. 7-11). Women's organizations such as the Sunshine Coast Women's Resources Centre (1997, Web Page) and the Rainbow Collective are currently addressing these concerns and providing women with training and access to get "hooked-up" (Amanhi, 1997, pp.14-17). Other groups, such as the Lesbian Mother's Support Society, provide grassroots effort by giving computer access and training for their minority group (High, 1997, pp. 78-81). Industry Canada has yet to allocate any funds specifically towards getting women online. According to an Angus Reid survey of British Columbians in January 1998, the following were seen as obstacles to getting online: lack of interest, limited computer knowledge, associated expenses, lack of time, and lack of benefit (Angus Reid, 1998, Web Page).

In Chapter Four I explained the qualitative and quantitative data analysis made possible by the participants' rich sharing of their experiences in narrative form, and through their web page submission after their completion of Hood's Scale of Mysticism. This chapter was divided into five sections, introduction and definitions, the general findings from the first questionnaire, the qualitative data explored within the framework provided by Stace, the women's narratives further expanded into specific categories and, finally, the quantitative results of Hood's Scale of Mysticism.

Section One included various definitions of spirituality volunteered by the women in the study. I also explained the range of activities that were included under my working title, and explained the limits of the study in these terms.

In Section Two, I reviewed the findings of the eighty women who completed the general questionnaire on the first web page. I was able to conclude that the years one spent in a physical activity, the time per session, or the number of sessions per week, had little bearing on the likelihood of having a spiritual experience. The women, were involved in many different activities; most women listed other sports, physical activities, martial arts or dance forms that they were involved in beyond that which they listed as their primary activity in which they reported their spiritual experiences. There was also a fair representation of women who engaged in physical activity, sport, martial arts and dance who participated alone, in groups or in both settings. The religious affiliation, language or country of residence seemed to have little bearing in this common experience.

Section Three included a summary of each of Stace's eight categories; ego quality, unifying quality, inner subjective quality, temporal/ spatial quality, noetic quality, ineffability, positive affect and religious quality. Alongside Stace's definition I included testimonials from several women as to the direct impact or feeling of each category, and provided a brief explanation based on the observations taken from the accounts of other women. Although none of the participants alluded to all eight categories in their narratives, each of the categories was clearly supported from among the various narratives. In each of case I compared and contrasted the stories from the women as they pertained to the experience of spirituality within their sporting practices, and how it affected them. Stace's eight categories were best used as a framework and starting point, as the women's narratives went far beyond these eight components.

In Section Four I explored other topics that had emerged from the women's experiences that were not included within Stace's categories of mysticism. These themes included connection, specific experiences of religious women, the relation of the setting to the experience, the experience as part of a pair, group or solo activity, competitive versus non-competitive experiences, feelings of refreshment, the loss of fear, women specific

experiences, women alone in the experience, and finally a few rich stories that must be shared in full (Appendix E).

Section Five provided a brief comparison between the quantitative results obtained through this study and those reported by Hood. The results I obtained from the scale as compared to Hood's results, even when compared to his sub-sample of women, were stronger. The total correlation coefficients from thirty-two point scale were, on average, higher than what Hood had obtained, as was the mean. The range and the standard deviation were both smaller than in Hood's study. This signifies that the there was little variation in the level of reported strength of these experiences reported by the women; indeed, the mode for my respondents was at the high limit of the scale, which, according to Hood, indicated a highly mystical experience.

I believe that "women are creators of knowledge and that we need to be involved in the process of naming our experience and promoting the visibility of all women's perspectives on all issues" (Pollock and Sutton, 1997, p31). The experience that I have been concerned with, spiritual experiences in physical activity, sport, martial arts and dance has now been named, and the next step is to make this information public and accessible. With the Internet, we have a new tool through which to share this knowledge. The next step in this research process will be to make the results of this study accessible to women. This will be done by changing the web pages used for data collection into a web page which will provide this content, and give something back to the research participants.

The foremost aim of this study was to document the experience that some women have while engaging in physical activity, sport, martial arts or dance. As it was the first of its kind, the objective was merely to document and describe these experiences. Now that this task has been completed, research on this topic can continue to answer other questions: What are men's experiences of spirituality in physical activity, sport, martial arts, and dance and do they differ from those of women? If so, how do they differ? Is age a factor in the experience? Is there a minimum age?

Although this appears to be a universal experience, that women bear witness to regardless of sport, race, disability, religion or sexual orientation, there may be some minor

differences, when examined more closely, between the experiences of women who adhere to eastern versus western faiths, where the involvement of the body is deemed completely natural and is encouraged. With further investigation, would differences emerge between categories of sports that did not emerge in this preliminary study?

It would be beneficial to do a comparison between the theory of "Flow" put forth by Csikszentmihalyi, and that of spiritual experiences during physical activity. It would also be useful to determine the effect of one's frame of mind and self-control as it relates to these experiences. Are they related to the mood of participants? What effect does the tension of thinking one is alone in the experience have on women, and would moving meditation or any planned awareness heighten one's experience? Can the experience be replicated when desired, or does the participant have no control at all? These questions, as well as many others, have yet to be answered.

In their article *Information Technology is A WOMEN'S RIGHTS Issue*, Sutton and Pollock said that women's groups have much to offer in the way of content: "our understanding of equality issues and ways in which to offer support and information are vital content for the Internet" (1997, p.33). I will end with another quote from the Canadian Women's Internet Association in an article entitled "Women getting online is still an equality issue" in their book, *Introduction to Virtual Organizing: Real Change* (1997, p.11):

> We are still at the beginning of using communication technology for women's equality work. New ideas are constantly being experimented with, shared in online discussions, and prepared for further development.

This thesis has provided a beginning for exploration into the spiritual experiences of women in physical activity, sport, martial arts and dance, and, as is the case with the new methods of technology that have been used to research this topic, we are still at the beginning of this discussion.

References

Amani, H. (1997). Low Income Women and The Internet. In S. Pollock and J. Sutton (Eds.), *Virtual Organizing, Real Change: Women's Groups Using the Internet.* Canada: Halcraft Printers. pp. 14-17. Rainbow Collective.

Angus Reid Survey. (1998). [Online]. Available: www.angusreid.com/syndicate/syndex.html.

Boiling, R.S. (1996). *The Ghost Pages.* [Online]. No longer available: <http://www.murlin.com/~webfx/ghost/form.html>.

Bryman, A. (1993). *Quality and Quantity in Social Research.* New York: Routledge. p. 131.

Clandinin, D.J., Connelly, F.M. (1994). Personal Experience Methods. In N.K. Denzin, and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research.* London: Sage Publications. pp. 413-426.

Communication Institute for Online Scholarship. (1996). *The Electronic Journal of Communication.* [Online]. Available: <cios.org/index.html>.

Coolican, C. (E-mail Communication, August 3rd, 1997).

Cowden, D. (1997). Women take to the 'net. *Women'space* Vol. 2 (4). p. 10.

Creswell J.W. (1995). *Research Design.* London, England: Sage Publications.

De Leeuw, E., Nicholls, WII. (1996). Technological Innovations in Data Collection: Acceptance, Data Quality and Cost. Sociological Research Online. Vol. 1 no. 4. [Online]. Available: <www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/1/4/leeuwe.html>

Dyson, E. (1997). *Release 2.0: A Design for Living in the Digital Age.* New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell.

Ebbelink, I. (1997). Computer Mediated Communication. [Online]. 36 paragraphs. Available: <huizen.dds.nl/~inki/>

Guttman, A. (1992). From Ritual to Record. In S.J. Hoffman (Ed.), *Sport and Religion.*. Windsor, Ontario: Human Kinetics. pp. 143-152.

GVU's WWW Surveying Team. (1997). GVU's Eight WWW User Survey Results. [Online]. Available <www.gvu.gatech.edu/user_surveys/survey-1997-10/>

GVU's WWW Surveying Team. (1994). GVU's First WWW User Survey Results. [Online]. Available: <www.cc.gatech.edu/piktow/survey/survey-1-1994/survey-results.html>

Harris, M. (1989). *Dance of the Spirit*. Toronto: Bantam Books. pp. 1-27.

Henderson, K.A. (1991). *Dimensions of Choice: A Qualitative Approach to Recreation, Parks and Leisure Research*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing, Inc.

Higgs, R.J. (1992). Muscular Christianity, Holy Play, and Spiritual Exercise: Confusion about Christ in Sports and Religion. In S.J. Hoffman (Ed.), *Sport and Religion*. Windsor, Ontario: Human Kinetics. pp. 89-104.

Higgs, R.G.(1995) *God in the Stadium*. Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky.

High S. (1997). Mommy Queerest. In S. Pollock and J. Sutton (Eds.), *Virtual Organizing: Women's Groups Using the Internet*. Canada: Halcraft Printers. pp. 78-81. Lesbian Mother's Support Society [Online], Web Page. Available: <www.lesbian.org/lesbian-moms/>.

Hinkson, J. (1993). *Lacrosse Fundamentals*. Toronto: Warwick Publishing Group. Introduction.

Hood, R.W. (1975). The Construction and Preliminary Validation of a Measure of Reported Mystical Experience. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. V. 14, pp. 29-41.

Jowan, M. (1997). Go Girl. *Go No Go* v. 19. [Online], Web Page. Available: <www.gogirlmag.com/backiss19/gono.html>.

K. Martin. (personal e-mail communication April 16, 1995).

L-soft Search Engine [Online], Search Engine. Available: <wnt.dc.lsoft.com/ltop-today.html>.

Lammer, M. (1986). Civilization in Sport History: ICOSH seminar: The Ancient and Modern Olympic Games. p. 23.

Leonard, G. (1975). *The Ultimate Athlete*. New York: Viking. p.3.

Littleton, S. (1997). Feminism in Grade 11 Biology. *Women'space* Vol. 3 No.1. p. 12.

Ludwig, M. (1997) Lesbians, Bi women and Body Image. [Online], Web Page. Available: <pantheon.yale.edu/~maryanne/survey.html>.

Martin, L. (1997). CRIAW and the use of Electronic Communication. In S. Pollock and J. Sutton (Eds.), *Virtual Organizing, Real Change: Women's Groups Using the Internet.* Canada: Halcraft Printers. p. 46.

Metlife Inc. (1997). Enter a Draw [Online], Web Page. Available: <www.metlife.com:80/Docs/Tshirt.html>.

Nelson, J.B. (1992). *Body Theology*. Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press.

Palme, J.(1995). *Electronic Mail.* Norwood: Artech House. Inc.

Panitach, V. (1998).From Bread Riots to Cyber Revolution. *Women'space* Vol. 3 No. 2. pp. 7-11.

Pennington, T. (1998). USPE-l survey. (E-mail communication Feb. 23rd).

Polkinghorne, D.E. (1988). *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences.* Albany New York: State of New York Press. pp. 15-16, 157-185.

Pollock, S. and Sutton, J. (1997). Information Technology is A WOMEN'S RIGHTS Issue. *Women'space* Vol. 3 No.1. pp. 30-33.

Pollock, S. and Sutton, J. (1997) Introduction. In S. Pollock and J. Sutton (Eds.), *Virtual Organizing, Real Change: Women's Groups Using the Internet.* Canada: Halcraft Printers. p. 11.

Rome, J. (1996). Communication Technology Survey. [Online], Web Page. Available: <www.fsc.edu:80/vic-prog/infocentral/content/riley/riley.html>.

Ruether, R.R. (1993). *Sexism and God Talk*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Sheehan, G. (1992). Playing. In S.J. Hoffman (Ed.), *Sport and Religion.* Windsor, Ontario: Human Kinetics pp. 83-88.

Sport Information Resource Centre [Online], Web Page. Available: <www.sirc.ca/>

Stace, W.T., (1960) Mysticism and Philosophy. Philadelphia: Lippincott.

Sutton, J. (1997). Arguments About Getting Online (Or Not). *Women'space* Vol. 3 No.1 p. 15.

Web Woman Page [Online], Web Page Available: <www.sunshine.net.sn0430/047>. [October 1997].

Whiting, S. (1997) Women Online! Internet and Design Basics [Computer Software]. 1996/97. British Columbia: JR Publishing.

Bibliography

Bandy, S.J. (1986). A Humanistic Interpretation of the Mind-Body problem in Western Thought. In Kleinman, S. (ed). *Mind and Body*. Champaign Illinois: Human Kinetics; pp. 25-30.

Barnsley, J. Ellis, D. (1992) *Research for Change*. Vancouver: The Women's Research Centre.

Boe, A.F. (1988). Sports in the Bible. In Bandy, S. (ed.) *Corbeus Triumphs*. San Diego, California: San Diego University Press.

Cook, J.A., Fonnow, M.M. (1990). Knowledge and Women's Interests. In Nielsen, J.M. (ed). *Feminist Research Methods*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press. 69-93.

Dahl, G. (1972). *Work, Play and Leisure in a Work Oriented Society*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House.

Decker, W. (1990). The Record of the Ritual: The Athletic Records of Ancient Egypt. In Carter, J.M., Kruger, A. (eds.) *Ritual and Record*. New York: Greenwood Press. pp 21-30.

Descartes, R. (1959). The Real Distinction between the Mind and the Body of Man. In Gerber, E. W. (ed). *Sport and the Body*. Lafleur, L.J., Translator. London, England: Henry Kimpton Publishers. pp. 132-133.

Diamant, L. (1991). How Psychology Relates to Sport, Exercise and Fitness. In Diamant, L. (ed). *Mind Body Maturity*. New York: Hemisphere. pp. 5-16.

Harding, S. (1987). (ed). Feminism and Methodology. Bloomington, Indiana: University Press.

Harmen, W.W. (1986). The Changing Image of Man/Woman: Signs of a Second Copernican Revolution. In Kleinman, S. (ed). *Mind and Body*. Champaign Illinois: Human Kinetics; pp. 25-30.

Herrigel, E. (1971). *The Zen Art of Archery*. New York: Random House.

Hoffman, S.J. (1992). Recovering a Sense of the Sacred in Sport. In S.J. Hoffman (Ed.), *Sport and Religion*. Windsor, Ontario: Human Kinetics. pp. 153-160.

Hoffman, S.J. (1992). Evangelicalism and the Revitalization of Religious Ritual in Sport. In S.J. Hoffman (Ed.), *Sport and Religion.* Windsor, Ontario: Human Kinetics. pp. 111-126.

Hoffman, S.J. (1992). Nimrod, Nephilim, and the athlete Dei. In S.J. Hoffman (Ed.), *Sport and Religion.* Windsor, Ontario: Human Kinetics. pp. 275-286.

Holmes, A. F. (1992) Towards a Christian Play Ethic. In S.J. Hoffman (ed.), *Sport and Religion.* Windsor, Ontario: Human Kinetics. pp. 245-252.

Kirby, S.L., McKenna, K. (1989). Experience, Research, Social Change. Toronto: Garamond Press.

Lenk, H. (1989) Sport: Between the Zen and Self. In (eds). Baum, G. and Coleman, J. Councilium. Edinburgh: T & T Clark.

Ross, J. (1986). Cartesian Dualisms and Sporting Education: Epistemological Incompatibility. In Kleinman, S. (ed). *Mind and Body*. Champaign Illinois: Human Kinetics; pp. 15-24.

Ryan, T. (1986). *Wellness Spirituality and Sports*. New York: Paulist Press.

Weiner, H. (1980). *Total Swimming*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Appendix A

Introductory Web Page

<http:www.wileyweb.com/sportspirit>

Master's Thesis Research
Deborah Hambly
University of Alberta
Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation
Supervising Professor: Dr. Shogan

The Research Question:

"What are women's experiences connecting spirituality in physical activity, sport, martial arts and dance?"

The Purpose of the Research

Women, including myself, are experiencing a link between spirituality and physical activities. There is a lack of information concerning not only the central issue of the relationship between spirituality and physical activities, but also the issue and its relation to women. The purpose of this thesis is to conduct exploratory research which will record and document the experience of spirituality and physical activity from women's point of view. The final result of this research will be to enable women to reclaim their experiences in both spiritual and physical activity venues, and to be the primary decision makers concerning their spiritual and physical wellbeing.

The Process

This research is being conducted as a two-stage process:

Part One Participants provide some background information.

Part Two After the questionnaires have been received, a sample of participants will be provided with a username and password, and asked to complete a narrative account and survey.

Please advise if you experience any difficulties with this site.

All content © 1997 Deborah Hambly.

Appendix B

Web Page Part One

http:www.wileyweb.com/sportspirit/survey1.html

Master's Thesis Research
Deborah Hambly
University of Alberta
Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation
Supervising Professor: Dr. Shogan

The Research Question:

"What are women's experiences connecting spirituality in physical activity, sport, dance & martial arts?"

The Purpose of the Research

Women, including myself, are experiencing a link between spirituality and physical activities. There is a lack of information concerning not only the central issue of the relationship between spirituality and physical activities, but also the issue and its relation to women. The purpose of this thesis is to conduct exploratory research which will record and document the experience of spirituality and physical activity from women's point of view. The final result of this research will be to enable women to reclaim their experiences in both spiritual and physical activity venues, and to be the primary decision makers concerning their spiritual and physical wellbeing.

Call for Participants

Participants should provide some background information. A sample of fifteen to twenty women will be contacted to complete the remainder of the research: a narrative account of their experience(s) and a 32-question form.

You may contact my professor at the University of Alberta, Debra Shogan.

1. Your name:
2. Your EMail:
3. Your gender: Female/ Male
4. Your age:_____ years old
5. What country do you live in?
6. Have you ever experienced spirituality while engaging in a physical activity? Yes/ No

7. In what physical activity were you engaged when you experienced spirituality?

8. Were you alone or with a group, or did you experience this in both settings?
Alone/ With a group/ Both
9. How many years have you been involved in this physical activity? ___years
10. How long is each session?
11. How many times a week do you engage in this physical activity? ____ times per week
12. What other physical activities do you participate in on a more casual basis?
13. Do you ascribe to any particular religious organization? If so, which one?
14. How often do you formally pray, meditate, worship, or spend time thinking about a higher being per week?

15. Do you have any physical disabilities? Yes/ No If so, please describe.

16. Optionally, you may provide a profile of your sexual orientation:

17. Please describe, in one paragraph, your experience combining physical activities and spirituality:

18. I would like to be notified when results of this survey are available. Yes/ No

Submission of this form is an indication of your interest in participating in this study, and also indicates your personal consent.

Please advise if you experience any difficulties with this site.
This site created and maintained by Wiley Web Writing.

All content © 1997 Deborah Hamlbly.

Appendix C

Web Page Part Two

http:www.wileyweb.com/sportspirit/auth.pl?file=survey2.html>
http://www.wileyweb.com/sportspirit/auth.pl>

Master's Thesis Research
Deborah Hambly
University of Alberta
Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation
Supervising Professor: Dr. Shogan

The Research Question:

"What are women's experiences connecting spirituality in physical activity, sport, martial arts and dance?"

Welcome, Deborah Hambly.
Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey.

Part 1 Narrative Account

Instructions

Please tell about your experience(s) of physical activity(ies) and your experience(s) of spirituality.

Feel free to type in your account in the form of a story or monologue.
Please write how you were feeling emotionally, physically and spiritually before, during and after the experience occurred.
Be sure to mention how long the experience lasted and what effect it had on you, both at the time and permanently.

Please be as descriptive as possible.
Please complete Part 1 before reading Part 2.

Please spend at least five minutes completing this narrative.

Appendix C (continued)

Part 2 Hood's Scale of Mysticism

Instructions

The attached questionnaire contains brief descriptions of a number of experiences. Some descriptions refer to phenomena that you may have experienced, while others refer to phenomenon that you may not have experienced. In each case note the description carefully and then select your choice from the pop-up at the left of the description, according to how much the description applies to your own experience of spirituality in physical activity, sport, martial arts or dance.

Choices

This description is definitely true of my own experience or experiences.
This description is probably true of my own experience or experiences.
I cannot decide.
This description is probably not true of my own experience or experiences.
This description is definitely not true of my own experience or experiences.

The Survey

Please respond to all statements

1. I have had an experience which was both timeless and spaceless.
2. I have never had an experience which was incapable of being expressed in words.
3. I have had an experience in which something greater than myself seemed to absorb me.
4. I have had an experience in which everything seemed to disappear from my mind until I was conscious only of a void.
5. I have experienced profound joy.
6. I have never had an experience in which my own self seemed merge into something greater.
7. I have never experienced a perfectly peaceful state.
8. I have never had an experience in which I felt as if all things were alive.
9. I have never had an experience in which all things seemed holy to me.
10. I have never had an experience in which all things seemed to be aware.
11. I have had an experience in which I had no sense of time or space.
12. I have had an experience in which I realized the oneness of myself with all things.
13. I have had an experience in which a new view of reality was revealed to me.
14. I have never experienced anything to be divine.
15. I have never had an experience in which time and space were non-existent.

16. I have never experienced anything I could call ultimate reality.
17. I have had an experience in which ultimate reality was revealed to me.
18. I have had an experience in which I felt that all was perfection at that time.
19. I have had an experience which I felt everything in the world to be part of the same whole.
20. I have had an experience which I knew to be sacred.
21. I have never had an experience in which I was unable to express adequately through language.
22. I have had an experience which left me with a feeling of awe.
23. I have had an experience that is impossible to communicate.
24. I have never had an experience in which I felt myself to be absorbed as one with all things.
25. I have had an experience that left me with a feeling of wonder.
26. I have never had an experience in which deeper aspects of reality were revealed to me.
27. I have never had an experience in which time, place and distance were meaningless.
28. I have never had an experience in which I became aware of a unity to all things.
29. I have had an experience in which all things seemed to be conscious.
30. I have never had an experience in which all things seemed to be unified into a single whole.
31. I have had an experience in which I felt nothing is ever really dead.
32. I have had an experience that cannot be expressed with words.

Please advise if you experience any difficulties with this site.
This site created and maintained by Wiley Web Writing.

All content © 1997 Deborah Hambly.

Thank you
for participating in this research.

Please advise if you experience any difficulties with this site.
This site created and maintained by Wiley Web Writing.

All content © 1997 Deborah Hambly.

Appendix D

Sample e-mail consent form

---------- Forwarded message ----------
Date: Mon, 28 Jul 1997 17:27:38 -0500
From: Beatrix <beatrix@crow.bmc.com> (not real name or e-mail)
To: Deborah Hambly <dhambly@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca>
Subject: Re: E-mail consent research form (fwd)

personal e-mail account: beatrix@crow.bmc.com
_____ Reply Separator
Subject: E-mail consent research form (fwd)
Author: Deborah Hambly <dhambly@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca> at unixlink
Date: 7/28/97 4:03 PM

Women's Spirituality and Sport Research
E-mail Consent Form

Dear Beatrix,
Thank you for filling out this form. In exchange for your participation I will guarantee confidentiality and anonymity. Furthermore, I will not release any information on the study prior to its conclusion. You may, at any time, decline to enter or withdraw from the research and for any reason without any consequences. If you wish to withdraw from the study, compose an e-mail and simply type "withdraw". If you have any further inquiries concerning the procedures, you can contact me via e-mail at the following address: dhambly@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca

In order to demonstrate your informed consent, please return this mail with your name from your personal e-mail account. I will then give you a personal username and password which will allow you to access the rest of the research site and leave your information securely. Please return this form within 3 days. Thank you!

****

Deborah Hambly mailto:dhambly@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca

/\ Spiritual Experiences of Women in Sport,
_/ Physical Activity, Sport, Martial Arts and Dance
+ Master's Thesis Research

Please take a few minutes to participate: http://www.wileyweb.com/sportspirit
****

Appendix E

Selection of narratives

Joanne

One experience I had that was both the most physically exhausting thing I'd done, as well as the most spiritually renewing, was climbing Mt. Rainier. It was my first mountaineering experience, and my fear and adrenaline from the beauty of the moon reflecting off the high glaciers, and the sweat trickling and freezing halfway down my body, is what propelled me to the summit. Every inch of my muscles strained and ached as I would look a crevasse in the eye and leap over it, praying that my crampons and ice axe would be my saviours if I slipped. Reaching the summit was never my goal; experiencing the majestic enormity of a mountain whose shadow I have lived my whole life in, was the whole reason behind my ascent. The feeling of my place in Nature, the exhilaration of pushing my body to its limits, the realization of my own mortality and how small I am in the whole wondrous cycle of life – this was why I'd come.

Leah

Hiking out of the Grand Canyon four years ago, I had pneumonia and it took me thirteen hours to get from the Colorado River to the rim of the Canyon. I was miserable, cold and sick, and my hiking partner had gone ahead to change our train reservations, so I was alone. As the day progressed, I realized how huge the canyon was, and how powerful, and this overwhelming sense of my and man's [sic] inability "to beat" the Canyon. In the end, we (as humans) will never be stronger than the Earth. For me, that force of the Earth, call it Mother Nature or Gaia, it was just overwhelming.

My second connection is through skydiving. Beyond just the awe of flying and being able to look down on the sun, there's a more personal spirituality to me. People have asked me if I have a death wish. No, I want to live so that I can jump again. And every time I jump out of a plane from 14,000 feet above the Earth, I have to conscientiously make the decision to release my main canopy. It is one time at which I feel I am in complete control of my own destiny. I am beyond the forces of fatality!

Rebeccah

I have spent my entire life feeling distant from my body. I was a fat, bookish child, subject to a variety of illnesses, and I am a fat adult. I was taught that I was ugly, repulsive. I was always aware of others judging my character by my size and finding me wanting. I learned that my body in movement was ugly, unfeminine. It was also painful. Long before I broke

my ankles, long before the partial paralysis, movement was excruciating for me. I have severe asthma. Gym class was sheer torture, never knowing if the breath that I forced into my lungs past the pain would be enough to move the bulk of me to some authority figure's satisfaction. I think I was seven when I began to dance in private. I would sneak out of bed in the middle of the night, and stand in the middle of the den twirling and gliding, bathed in moonlight filtered through the picture window, unafraid to bump into things. It was the beginning of a connection between movement, dancing, nature, and feeling whole. It was my first knowledge of balance, a deep internal peace that I associate with god. I am always looking for that joy, that sense of being fully myself that comes from dancing. I learned the exquisite pleasure of tribal solidarity. I learned to revel in sweat dripping down my breasts and back. When I am out in public, I feel self-conscious and ugly before I start to dance. I learned to close my eyes in a room full of people, to forget that I was the fat girl that people used to laugh at, to publicly move and swivel and grind to a steady, impersonal rhythm. I detest physical activity, except dancing. When I dance, it is the only time that I experience movement as pleasurable.